

*POETRY*  
*A MAGAZINE OF VERSE*  
*VOLUME LI*



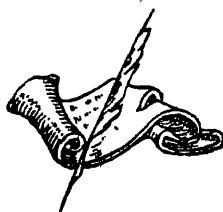


# A Magazine of Verse

Founded by Harriet Monroe

VOLUME LI

October, 1937 — March, 1938



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CHICAGO



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ERRATA:

- Page 96, line 30: For *tremblers* read *temblors*.
- Page 183, line 17: For *were* read *where*.
- Page 205: No space between lines 10 and 11.
- Page 261, line 17: For *scene* read *scène*.
- Page 266, line 12: For *Spencer* read *Spenser*.
- Page 268, lines 12-13: For *blank-verse letters* read  
*letters in heroic couplets*.
- Page 293, line 37: Insert quotation mark at end of line.

# Poetry

A Magazine of Verse

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To have great poets  
there must be great audiences too

*Whitman*

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To these, who have remained loyal to POETRY and its purposes over many years; to the Friday Club and Society of Midland Authors, who have donated prizes and other benefits; and particularly to the Carnegie Corporation of New York, whose generous gifts have enabled POETRY to continue, the editors of the magazine wish to express their appreciation and that of the poets we have published.

The death of Mrs. Howard Shaw (known to our readers as Frances Shaw), which occurred in October, deprived the magazine of one of its most loyal friends and supporters, and of a well-loved contributor. One of Mrs. Shaw's last acts was to send POETRY a gift, with these words: "The magazine has my good wishes as it always has had."

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*POETRY*  
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*VOLUME LI*



If American periodical literature has today a little peak, a little group of journals, raising it to the level of the best European cosmopolitanism, or at any rate in that direction, it is because POETRY showed how, editorially and economically, it could be done.

—*Ford Madox Ford*

I have read POETRY since the first number and find it constantly entertaining . . . No other poetry magazine—and there have been dozens of them—has even remotely approached it in interest, or, for that matter, in genuine hospitality to ideas.

—*H. L. Mencken*

Vol. LI

No. I

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# P O E T R Y

## A MAGAZINE OF VERSE

VOL. LI NO. I

### TWENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY NUMBER

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#### A RABBIT AS KING OF THE GHOSTS

THE difficulty to think at the end of day,  
When the shapeless shadow covers the sun  
And nothing is left except light on your fur —

There was the cat slopping its milk all day,  
Fat cat, red tongue, green mind, white milk  
And August the most peaceful month.

To be, in the grass, in the peace fullest time,  
Without that monument of cat,  
The cat forgotten in the moon;

And to feel that the light is a rabbit-light,  
In which everything is meant for you  
And nothing need be explained;



POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

Then there is nothing to think of. It comes of itself;  
And east rushes west and west rushes down,  
No matter. The grass is full

And full of yourself. The trees crowned are for you,  
The whole of the wideness of night is for you,  
A self that touches all edges,

You become a self that fills the four corners of night.  
The red cat hides away in the fur-light  
And there you are humped high, humped up,

You are humped higher and higher, black as stone.  
You sit with your head like a carving in space  
And the little green cat is a bug in the grass.

*Wallace Stevens*

## UNTITLED

Tender and insolent,  
Beware. Within this lies,  
When little more is spent,  
The crowded tears of the eyes,  
Naked astonishment.

The pillow torn with pain,  
The dogging agony  
That could not happen again,  
Once more will thrash at thee  
Sharper than winter rain.

Beware, beware, beware. .  
Give thyself wider room  
Than these sweet eyes can share,  
Than the most cruel bloom  
Of the false tall and fair.

*Louise Bogan*

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

THREE POEMS

AUTUMN

A stand of people  
by an open

grave underneath  
the heavy leaves

celebrates  
the cut and fill

for the new road  
where

an old man  
on his knees

reaps a basket-  
ful of

matted grasses for  
his goats

AFRICA

Quit writing  
and in Morocco  
raise a beard

*William Carlos Williams*

Go without a hat  
like poor Clew  
who braved

the desert heat.  
Or if you will  
like Herb

sit on a hotel  
balcony and  
watch your ship

while the girls  
bring wines  
and food

to you privately.  
The language?  
Make money.

Organize  
The language.  
Right.

WEASEL SNOUT

Staring she  
kindles  
the street windows

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

to daintiness —  
Under  
her driving looks

gems plainly  
colored blue and  
red and

green grow  
fabulous again — She  
is the modern marvel

the ray from  
whose bulbous eyes  
starts

through glass walls  
to animate  
dead things —

*William Carlos Williams*

## TWO POEMS

### BE READY

Be land ready  
for you shall go back to land.

Be sea ready  
for you have been nine-tenths water  
and the salt taste shall cling to your mouth.

Be sky ready  
for air, air, has been so needful to you—  
you shall go back, back to the sky.

### NIGHT BELLS

Two bells six bells  
two bells six bells  
on a blue pavilion  
Out across a smooth blue pavilion  
And between each bell  
One clear cry of a woman  
“Lord God you made the night  
too long too long.”

*Carl Sandburg*

FORTUNE FOR MIRABEL

Tell, tell our fortune, Mirabel,  
Shuffle the pack and cut  
Cards spread face upward on the carpet  
Over the faded green sweet and violet pastures:  
The hour-glass, time, the blond girl and brunette.  
Give us good cards tonight: the faces  
Beautiful and new — and love, Mirabel,  
The pink heart pierced and the great round yellow sun;  
We shall be rich tonight: laurels for fame,  
The gold-mine falling from your right hand,  
And O the lute and ribbons and the harp!

— Not the unopened letter nor the blind eye  
Nor the fire card bright as war flowing through Spain  
Nor the lightning card, troopship in storm  
Nor the quick arrow pointing nowhere to the sky.  
Not now tonight and not the spotted devil,  
The naked dancing psychiatric patient,  
Who wept, always the lover, not the man,  
Sold the pawn ticket — not tonight, Mirabel,  
Not the deep cypress vista and the urn,  
The kidnapped ten-year-old, the head  
In pear tree branches and one delicate frosted hand  
On the back stair.

— Nor the green island card that means go home

*Horace Gregory*

To the dark house with the gas shut off  
Where morning papers drop to the floor,  
The milkman passes and the landlord waits — not these  
tonight.

But the bridal card in white, pale blossoms in yellow air,  
New homes unlocked, unwept,  
And the great good fortune sun card shining down.  
Is it love, Mirabel, behind the pearly gates?  
This last card? Or the black faceless end  
Behind each card, even the laurels hidden, the dancer dead,  
Tonight over and gray light glancing  
On tired, powerless sleeping breasts and arms,  
Mirabel: Good morning.

*Horace Gregory*



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BEARDED OAKS

The oaks, how subtle and marine!  
Bearded, and all the layered light  
Above them swims; and thus the scene,  
Recessed, awaits the positive night.

So, waiting, we in the grass now lie  
Beneath the langorous tread of light;  
The grasses, kelp-like, satisfy  
The nameless motions of the air.

Upon the floor of light, and time,  
Unmurmuring, of polyp made,  
We rest; we are, as light withdraws,  
Twin atolls on a shelf of shade.

Ages to our construction went,  
Dim architecture, hour by hour;  
And violence, forgot now, lent  
The present stillness all its power.

The storm of noon above us rolled,  
Of light the fury, furious gold,  
The long drag troubling us, the depth:  
Unrocked is dark, unrippling, still.

Passion and slaughter, ruth, decay  
Descended, whispered grain by grain,  
Silted down swaying streams, to lay  
Foundation for our voicelessness.

*Robert Penn Warren*

All our debate is voiceless here,  
As all our rage is rage of stone;  
If hopeless hope, fearless is fear,  
And history is thus undone.

(Our feet once wrought the hollow street  
With echo when the lamps were dead  
At windows; once our headlight glare  
Disturbed the doe that, leaping, fled.)

That caged hearts make iron stroke  
I do not love you now the less,  
Or less that all that light once gave  
The graduate dark should now revoke

So little time we live in Time,  
And we learn all so painfully,  
That we may spare this hour's term  
To practice for Eternity.

*Robert Penn Warren*

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TWO POEMS

THE POOL

Once clear, once flower-imaging and fern,  
Pebbled exact below and tree designed  
These waters where the high suns turn  
To older eyes consigned.

Now what you hold is fathomless, O dark  
Reflector of dimmed passion, face by face  
Thrice-swollen and uncertain in your stark  
Waters where ruins interlace.

Many came here once and I saw them gaze  
Upon themselves more lovely and alone  
Within your shadowy waters than a blaze  
For beacon on a stone.

These proud, these purposeless, these fair and false  
So crowd your darkened mirror now that night  
Can find no semblance of a star to waltz  
Twin-singled in your bright.

And one grown aged and angry at your brim  
Sees herself ghostly, all her fair confined  
Within the inter-stasis of the grim  
Waters across the mind.

Deliberately, O death, she'd drop to drowned,  
But a changed season sweeps the torture past

*Eda Lou Walton*

Leaving your eye as innocent and round  
As a child's glance upcast.

ALTERNATE, NONE

Never again the long sunny day  
And mountains struck in sapphire on the sky,  
Valleys ripe in their harvest to the gray  
Crescendo of the eye.

Now dawn more brief and noon more clouded in,  
Afternoon slipping toward the snowy night,  
The sands deserted, thinning to the thin  
Sea and its symbol, flight.

And on the sickle sea no boat, no sail,  
Nor moonlight's sweep evasion of the dark,  
Though the flesh sicken and the spirit fail,  
Ghostly we shall embark.

*Eda Lou Walton*

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ASCENT OF MONADNOCK

*To C. M. F.*

I

Deep through the midcourse of morning  
Is shadowed the base of the mountain ;  
Under the wings of the stormcloud.  
Only the top peak takes light.

I would climb up against shadow,  
Leaving the lost past behind me ;  
I would move up through the darkness,  
Breasting each crag till it pass.

I would come out where the rocks  
Glow, shadeless granite beneath the broad sun.  
Till my soul on the summit, set free there,  
Breathes naked air, and pure light.

II

The mountain stands aloof :  
Blue-black its bulk upshouldered on the sky :  
Its brooding power made vast  
In memory's afternoon.

Now summer drifts away,  
That flung green leaves far upward to its base ;  
The feathery alleys of the fern and spruce  
Are lit with goldenrod, in drooping sprays.

*John Gould Fletcher*

In heart I climbed,  
While my eyes measured heights I dared not scale;  
In heart I kept  
Faith that beyond the darkness there was light.

Let shadows stay,  
And make remote this final peak of life;  
Till on the last steep crags  
There spreads the pure cloak of the cloud's snow-white.

III

Up the grim slopes we went  
Toilsomely, foot by foot;  
Love flowering in two lives,  
As from a single root:

Up granites never changed  
To greet the changing sky;  
And saw, by wood and pond,  
The clouds float lazily by.

You for whom, had I power,  
I'd give this glittering world;  
And I on whom, each hour,  
Love rose again and stirred;

We two trod the last slopes,  
Laughter and light and peace;  
And sat down on the stones,  
And saw the sky's increase:

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Each field and tree and farm  
Of which we formed a part;  
Love had not lost its aim  
Since you lived in my heart.

*John Gould Fletcher*

MOWN HAY

The mown hay lies like moonlight on  
This meadow in the summer sun.  
The eye is hesitant to see,  
With noon, night's luminosity  
Rivering these fields: only the mind,  
Friendly to phantoms, is resigned.

*Kenneth Slade Alling*

## SEA-WEED

Men who pause, weakened before some Sea  
the woven images of sky — breaking,  
the flood stream grooved between new banks;  
the air where violence scatters some whistling birds —  
the fear that wrecks the Mariner  
scuttling the stars, the Big Dipper — diving,  
a lost point of light!

You cannot pause at the mere dream  
of the Sea, or scene of fear, to fumble  
the steering wheel —

or listen to rain  
hauling down the wind: the keel and rudder  
steer, as the stars guide, filaments of the firmament,  
the bright lights of science — darkened;

but you are the wind  
driven in darkness, interior of ignorance and chance,  
soundings in your brain —  
the soul dropped like an anchor

I have heard your call  
above the familiar sound, the dead birds—floating on the Sea;  
the throat retching above the normal pitch, howling  
beyond the darkness of the will:  
the point of chance, the last call: the waves washing.

*Harry Roskolenko*



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RESURRECTED BY A BOMB, BY GOD

From whited sepulchres released  
Familiar once more with the sun,  
The grandsires of the parish view  
The dawn of a millennium.

Their children's children torn by steel  
Rot in the streets of ruined towns  
While mobile units sweep the fields  
And shoot the last survivors down.

It is not what the parson preached  
Nor what they fondly hoped would be,  
But nothing matters to the dead  
For they, and they alone, are free.

In life they held a vague belief  
They would be summoned to appear  
After a long and dreamless sleep  
To find Jerusalem builded here

With gates of pearl and streets of gold  
And Jesus Christ dispensing manna  
And everyone in snow-white robes  
While choirs of angels sang Hosanna.

It cost them nothing to believe  
And so they are not grieved to find

*Nelson Del Bittner*

The heavenly prospect of their creed  
Was but a fraud upon mankind.

In vain the spy has found them out,  
Betrays them to the general staff;  
Vouchsafed ineffable repose  
They grin to hear the bomber's wrath.

*Nelson Del Bittner*

### PEDANT

For him the Dialogues are glib  
From too much fingering.

He is too numb to feel the questioning frost,  
Past being woken and broken for sowing.

He wraps himself in loneliness,  
Thinks himself bone of Socrates' bone.

But hear him gownless and unlibrariéd,  
You'll catch an ancient undertone  
Of quibbling jurors, discover there his stock;

Discern in his sun-cheated soil  
The green hemlock.

*Rupert Hodge*

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CATALINA

I have been seeking to create some shadowy, figured myth  
immense as death,

solid with portent and of strict, slow phrase,  
with which to praise  
and vivify our timed eleven days,

for I am grateful for that love which, waking and sleeping,  
angry, forgiving and sober, in all weather,  
stormed us into an island-cove together.

Like a suburban landscape left behind  
drained out of the mind old compromise, drained out of the  
mind  
infamous testimony, sealed and countersigned,

as we lay, wholly silent,  
and the sea licked against us and the island.

Beside us were the changing changeless tides ; above us, rivers  
of air ;  
as we lay there

the zenith swelled, pulsing with stars, as a sea-inlet fills.  
The stars above dark hills,

*Clark Mills*

and the sea stirred within us, a long rhythm  
we felt but could not fathom.

When the crippled in spirit with grave dead faces ring you,  
do not surrender, do not confess and repent;  
stun them with laughter; argue; grow insolent;

remembering that love's truth,  
defend us both.

Say that the moment of our farewell contained all grief  
bound in a single sheaf,

say that in sound of one voice  
we found some reason, against much bitter logic, to rejoice,

to shout back at the wind, scale a high hill in the sun, plunge  
into the sea  
and swim with motion of gulls, remote and free  
beneath blue fronds, the wavering branches of a water-tree.

Even if interstellar space, the foul abyss,  
was enemy to our kiss,

and though the slow drift of sidereal time was wasting over  
us and over the world, invisible to sight,  
we went our way and stood against that night  
providing our own light.

*Clark Mills*

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THE JOURNEY

Why is it we were always blinded  
by events like storms? Why did we feel  
we had to fail when there was the river  
pursuing to the sea, the railroad running  
to the blazing terminal?

We could not have missed the way  
if we had read the signs, the crumpled  
houses with white faces staring through,  
the factory overgrown with grass  
in the boards, heartlessly simple.

And yet so easily lost with the leaflets flying  
crying the way, we in the inhuman air,  
alone and strangers to all men,  
time unbeginning, resting on the twisted roots  
of trees, deaf to the whistle of the train.

But there suddenly we found them, the tracks  
in the wilderness, twin rails of silver,  
so true, running past the decaying countryside,  
the leaves dead, the ads peeling from the billboards,  
happily, happily, to a city lit up with love.

*Robert Friend*

## FOREST LANDSCAPES

### THE DEER IN THE GLADE

I saw them stand—  
Not moon more unaware of us—  
Trustful, with cool content  
Infusing them. They stood  
Pale bronze within a wood  
Wherein green leaves were spent;  
A doe with triple calves,  
And the buck guarding them.  
Each had as fairy fine a heel  
As facet of a gem;  
Each had as delicate an ear  
As redskin's to the ground.  
I only spoke in praise of them;  
The brittle leaves were fleetly leapt,  
And leapt without a sound.

### IN MOLTEN SUNLIGHT

Now at the window in the molten sunlight  
The woman sits, and sorts her silken patches  
—Bits from this dress and that—shakes out her hair  
That sunlight, through the window, warms and matches.  
All her thought circles in the everywhere,  
Vague, pleased, and rich. Now in her body's throbbing

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Is the sun's music; and the rose outside  
Like her — suspended on time's stalk — immortal  
In this pause-laden moment, when, life's bride,  
She knows his kiss; but lingers on his portal.

A perfect note now fades along the lyre  
Of grace: oh, she may turn again  
In days of darkness to a picture flashed  
By stillness and fruition on her brain;  
Finding delight — as in a treasure cached.

THE URNS OF FRUIT

The urns of fruit  
From terra cotta fashioned  
Are tranquil — carven on the sunlit wall —  
While pale leaves by the autumn wind compelled  
Snap the twig's leash;  
Lost entities they fall.

They fall as fell  
The calendar's spent pages;  
To waste and rubble do their outlines tend;  
Themselves enrichers of returning buds  
That spring will fashion,  
Autumn's edict bend.

While baby turns to child,  
And child to man,

*Jean Anderson*

The terra cotta urns upon the wall  
Have let no pear dissolve, no grape is crushed ;  
The golden apples  
Stare at golden fall.

Then am I reassured  
That Adrian's coin  
Outlasts his head ; bless the medallions pure  
That yet confront us when the man is dust.  
Oh artist  
How your handiwork is sure.

THE PALE GARDEN

I have seen the pale garden and the sunken pool  
When the fog-bearing wind blew from the sea  
Lie open to his clutch. The ivy streamer  
At the pool's rim he wildly did possess  
More than the sun had ever,  
Riotously.  
Like a rope writhen,  
Flung against a pane,  
The impress of that knotted lash was hurled  
Against the crystal quiet of the place,  
A scorpion's tail, again  
And yet again.

Oh, never tell me a grief separates  
That autumn pallor from spring's rosiest day.



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I am as feverish in secret now  
When all the petals of one ecstasy  
Lie severed, as incurably alert  
As on the crimson dawn of holiday.  
I pierce my heart with question,  
I demand  
That the mind answer to explain this mode.  
Not without pride and valor will I take  
Time's grey invasion  
Of my flowering land.

I have seen the pale garden, and the sunken pool  
—When the fog bearing winds blew from the sea —  
Not with indifferent eyes; but as one knowing  
That all things earthly have some close alliance  
With the deep residue of earth in me.  
The austere gaunt shape of winter not affrights me;  
I bring to it too curious a heart.  
Only the nerveless hour unnerves the spirit.  
It dreads the darkening of the revelation  
Of the new thing,  
When the old falls apart.

BAY BRIDGE

Nine silver arches risen above the roar  
And hum of wheels astound the level roads  
With their serene triumphant eminence.

*Jean Anderson*

Steel-hooved, Pegasus leaps in shining arcs.  
He skims the air his ardor chained no more!

Below the tides, below the amorphous zone  
That often fog inhabits. Often lost  
The inhabitants of no mean city pause  
—Adrift in a chaotic wildering time —  
To mark the silver reins, the occasional post.

Sky span of silver, how they love your tread  
Who may not leave the earth, nor level days;  
Who know the tides, but not the embarkation.  
We have seen them stand as by a miracle  
Entranced — rapt, wistful, yet repaid —  
And it would seem that you returned their gaze.

If stilly glades of steel could speak, those boughs  
That gulls inhabit in their resting hours,  
Those spars that never float, set above tides,  
What would they say to us as guarantors  
Of permanence in those our fateful ides?

“Build, build, oh choose the muscular refrain  
While rivets rock the reaches of the sky;  
Make fast the anchor, and make proud the arch;  
Then in that wistful pause before the dark  
Admire the immortal immobility.”

*Jean Anderson*

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### POETRY'S QUARTER-CENTURY

**T**WENTY-FIVE years ago this month, in October 1912, the first issue of POETRY was offered to the public. An adventure began; a stir in our literary and spiritual life was set in motion; the gates swung open on a period of uncalculated discoveries in contemporary art; and a date was set in American poetry which it has become impossible for any future historian to ignore. Today three hundred numbers of the magazine — fifty volumes — stand filed and bound on the shelves and an eventful quarter-century of achievement stands displayed — a chapter in modern literature that covers not only the printed contents of POETRY's pages, but the temper and ideals that have given their impulse to one of the most dramatic phases of our national life.

The October 1937 issue of the magazine, and the present editorial, are not an occasion for mere pride or unbecoming congratulation, but for recognition and gratitude. The founder of the magazine and its editor for twenty-four years was denied the opportunity of witnessing its silver jubilee and receiving the tribute of her fellow-citizens and beneficiaries. Many of her early associates have gone with her, and so have poets who helped to make POETRY's early issues the monthly events they were in contemporary literature. Modesty, therefore, is not a problem. The survivors of those early days know where honor belongs, and the successors of Harriet Monroe are too closely aware of the feat of courage and endurance she performed and the problems she passed on

### POETRY'S *Quarter Century*

to share too complacently in the rewards appropriate to such an anniversary. This is a moment for homage, to POETRY's founder, its past contributors, and its supporters, and in that homage the present staff can freely and gratefully join, knowing that for ourselves the moment demands another duty: the obligation of scanning the lessons of these twenty-five years and seeing what they tell about the literature of our time; of profiting by POETRY's ambition, errors, crises, and achievement; and of deciding how they prepared the way not only for the coming work of the magazine, but for the future of literature itself.

But such a responsibility shall not detract from the festivities worthy of an anniversary. Pleasure comes first, and this particular pleasure has many sources. It comes in remembering the courage of POETRY's beginnings in the doubtful days before that first October; in recalling the high sense of adventure that spurred Miss Monroe and her first associates through their early discoveries and conflicts; in hearing about old combats and triumphs; in catching again the excitement that came with the first poems of Lindsay, Pound, Sandburg, Eliot, Stevens, Joyce, Frost, and the procession of Twentieth Century poets as it passed through the files of the magazine; in marking the ebb and flow of popular enthusiasms and critical beliefs; and in knowing that POETRY has maintained from the start a confidence in the future destiny of its contributors when most of its fellow-magazines fell prey to skepticism or non-support or easy discouragement.

By this time POETRY's record is too well known to require

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another retelling, and its more intimate history is not only too familiar (in these pages and elsewhere) to require repeating, but too rich in anecdotes and personalities to hope for justice in a few pages. In a few weeks Harriet Monroe's autobiography will be published and in it will reappear, with the charm and enthusiasm which only she could give them, the ceremonies and dramatic episodes that have punctuated the career of her venture. Upon that venture she entered with the high heart and optimism of her generation, and she found awaiting her as complete a ratification of her confidence as American poetry has ever given a valiant pioneer. What arrived after October 1912 was the revival of America's spiritual forces for which she and a few fellow-patriots had been waiting for decades. She had called for it in 1893 when the tide of national pride was as high as its spiritual utterance was low; now she found her response from a new generation just entering on years of conflict and disillusionment to which the poet's art was to give a saving dignity and intelligence. POETRY became an honored prophet before it was five years old. It found its good faith reinforced by new books, new magazines, new schools and movements on every side. America's coming-of-age appeared at last to be a reality. No one can recall those years of awakening without envying the gusto and enthusiasm that accompanied them, the sense of enlarging horizons, the victories over timidity and convention, the freshening of language and ideas, the satisfaction of seeing the old spectres of intolerance and discretion collapsing in defeat.

## POETRY'S *Quarter Century*

POETRY has often prided itself on its auspicious birth. It found, by some miracle of anticipation, the exactly psychological moment for its appearance on the scene. Such good fortune was no mere accident. It came through a vision at once prophetic and practical. That vision believed a new age of poetry to be inevitable in the maturing intelligence and energy of a new generation, but it also saw that without support, defense, and an opportunity for publication, the voice of that generation would remain unheard, and thus fail in the support on which the poet's value and prosperity depend. The day for exclusive and self-sufficient esthetic ideals was over; the need for a collaboration between art and life was again urgent; and when POETRY took its motto from Whitman it declared its intention of seeing that such compromise and mutual enrichment would be brought about.

We can now see how far this aim succeeded; how far this realistic purpose enabled the journal to survive the collisions and retreats, movements and counter-movements, that have made contemporary literature a battle-ground. Under such conditions a more specialized or sectarian magazine may express a viewpoint or defend an argument, but it is not likely to seize the broader importance of literature and impress it with unmistakable conviction on the spirit of an age. What is needed — and what gave POETRY from the first its special claim to long life and attention — is a combination of eloquence and taste, of propaganda and a healthy critical instinct for value. Without that equipment, the magazine would never have survived the confusions and antipathies

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that surrounded it. It survived them in spite of choosing the difficult task of being sympathetic to the claims of all schools, and asking only for the quality that makes any kind or school of art worthy of respect. In an age of liberated authorship and open experiment the risks of such a choice must have seemed forbidding, but to have avoided them would have meant the opposite risk of running to type, becoming narrowly sectarian, and inevitably failing to keep abreast of the march of thought and art in an age that refuses to consider complacency a virtue or the creative energy of poets a vice.

Yet POETRY's task today is far different from that of twenty-five years ago — as different, in most respects, as the world of 1937 is unlike the last years of the Great Peace that was to end in 1914. The impulse of that hour was still one of discovery, of releasing undiscovered energies and liberating the creative spirit from old prejudice and servility, and the time was ready to welcome the defiance necessary for such a task. Today the temper of literature, no less than of politics and society, is more critical, more hardened in skepticism and doubt, more suspicious of the outward shows of bravery, more keenly sharpened by doubt, grief, and disillusionment. It is impossible to expect poetry to show the fresh face and undiscouraged optimism, or even the complete confidence in its duty to society, that it showed when the contemporary movement was young. To many readers of POETRY — especially those who have been loyal supporters from early years — these changes have come with regret, for they have removed the magazine from the high exhilaration

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and novelty of its early numbers. But it must be remembered that many of those early numbers were first read with a similar distress by conservatives who adhered to a past tradition, and that our issues today reflect — so far as they are privileged to do so by our contributors — what the serious poetry of any decade like the present one must reflect: a transition fully as momentous and more painfully decisive in lives that are now bearing the brunt of ordeal and giving that ordeal the expression of song. The song may announce a different kind of conquest; its language may often be as distressing as the events it records; it may disturb our peace of mind and deny us many of the pleasures we expect verse to give. But if it disturbs us effectively it has not been written in vain and POETRY's effort in giving it a hearing has not been misspent, for the magazine has never justified its ideals more forcefully than when it aroused its readers by printing the bold and courageous poem that refuses to compromise with mere popularity or easy success, but finds instead some feature of that truth in experience and language which it is the duty of the poet to reveal.

POETRY's long years of activity are full of lessons in that kind of revelation. They sometimes also show how the revelation may be missed. But they make it clear that a magazine of verse has a great responsibility to observe: it must recognize truth in the most intense and uncompromising form that words can give it. Only by publishing that kind of truth does it justify its existence. Whatever honors POETRY may claim here rest on the zeal of its founder and on the



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support she won from her friends, associates, and contributors. Together they met the challenge of an age of triumphant changes and baffling reversals — and met it with the force and confidence that has given the magazine its long life. Today their work offers its lesson and encouragement to a new generation of poets and editors, and points the way toward POETRY's future.

M. D. Z.

### A FORWARD LOOK

October of this year marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the founding of POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*. Born in a time of change and stress, the venture has survived to confront a period of even greater tension — a world in which the traditional values of literature are questioned as never before. The good and the beautiful, *to agathon kai to kalon* of Socratic thought, are no longer enough in themselves to withstand the newest scrutiny. They must, say the social-minded, be harnessed, directed, and made to serve. In the totalitarian states this has been attempted, with what loss or gain to culture we can only surmise.

After another quarter-century the present turmoil may have subsided. Abstract beauty may come again into favor. No one can accurately predict the literary future, but certainly poets will live and sing then as now, and if they sing they will need an audience. That need alone would justify the perpetuation of POETRY. The magazine has had a glorious past, often reviewed, especially during this year since the

death of its founder, Harriet Monroe. We might consider it the better part of valor to

set before its echoes fade  
The fleet foot on the sill of shade,  
And hold to the low lintel up  
The still-defended challenge cup,

but regard for personal prestige has never been included in our editorial policy. POETRY was established as a touchstone of the times, a medium for that voice which always gives the most truthful picture of contemporary human life. Fiction and the drama, however carefully planned to reconstruct the current world, seldom take us directly to the heart of man. The poet does so by crystallizing his own emotions.

Twenty-five years from today, some critic, taking a backward look, may be able to choose from the pages of POETRY's history those movements which were worth while, cast aside those which were meaningless. It is not the task of editors to decide such matters for posterity. We believe a magazine of poetry should remain so elastic and sensitive that it can reflect all tendencies as soon as they arise, unlike an anthology, which usually records movements already concluded and solidified. Although one hopes to find in anthologies poems of proved merit, the critic in search of a complete panorama discovers that their selectiveness is his loss. A magazine lives partly through its mistakes. POETRY has survived many false literary enthusiasms by subscribing to none while mirroring all, and the most casual reading of our bound volumes proves the comprehensiveness of their scope.

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In 1912, when the huge fanfare of *vers libre* was abroad, the old was being discarded, with the usual result of pain and anger among those who had been reared in its traditions. The "new poetry" was hated and feared in a measure out of all proportion to the innovations it proposed. Conservatives recognized in free verse the voice of a changing epoch, and by their resentment conceded the poet's real importance in relation to the social scheme. At the same time they nourished and sustained the movement with opposition and its accompanying publicity. Today a number of those rebels of 1912 find themselves looking with dubious wonder on another emancipation. Remembering their own revolt, they are not so sure and noisy as the reactionaries of twenty-five years ago. They know there is good in rebellion.

Meanwhile the newest poets move about with assurance in their rare medium of symbolism, surrealism, and associational technique. Most of them have known no other fashion in verse. They may have first felt the inclination to write when they read Joyce, Wallace Stevens, or Eliot. They began their apprenticeship when the great lyric impulse of the 1920's was already outworn; with the rest of the lyricist's Bible they burned the tenets of "simplicity, economy, and precision" on the general pyre. They embarked lightly on a sea of that sort of poetry whose very cloudiness of import seems its chief charm. And where did these experimentalists first find attention and publication? In the same small magazine which had devoted ten years to the deplored lyric-writers.

### *A Forward Look*

POETRY can hope only to recognize, under whatever dress, the flesh-and-blood poet, to bring him up before the world and let him have his say while his genius burns and his style is still the one accepted by his contemporaries. Because we believe that nothing can destroy the real value of the poet's outlook, we believe in the continued necessity of a journal devoted entirely to his craft. Out of all history the poets are the characters who live longest and speak most clearly. Generals, dictators and proletariats flourish and die, but the poet who sang for them goes on long afterward; the age is named for Homer, Horace, Goethe or Dante, not for the demagogue or king who ruled it. By refusing to discontinue, POETRY attempts to impersonate the stubborn soul of all creative art which endures wars, social upheavals, and periods of semi-darkness, only to emerge again in a more golden renaissance.

J. N. N.

### RESPONSES TO PRESSURE

Grierson's new study of Wordsworth and Milton<sup>1</sup> is organized on the basis of a distinction between prophetic and didactic poetry, the prophetic poet "putting into the language and pattern of his poetry his deepest intuitions as these have been evoked by a great political and religious experience." The author contends that didactic verse "may at times rise, as in Dryden and Pope, to the level of effec-

<sup>1</sup>*Wordsworth and Milton, Poets and Prophets. A Study of Their Reactions to Political Events*, by Sir Herbert J. C. Grierson. Macmillan Co.

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tive poetic oratory, poetic declamation," but "it never becomes poetry, pure and simple, till the didactic becomes merged in the prophetic, till you feel that the poet is not expounding or defending a thesis but pouring forth in imaginative language and moving rhythms the intuitive images which rise from the unanalyzable blend of sense, emotion, and thought."

Though he objects to those who would accuse Milton of a breach in "unified sensibility," he concludes that, in *Paradise Lost*, "the poet and the prophet, or to put it otherwise, the poet as creator and the poet as critic, meet but fail to coalesce, come even into conflict with one another, leave on the reader's mind and imagination conflicting impressions." Didactically, the poem "aims at one effect, the justification of God's ways to man." But "if any moral springs straight out of the story itself it is . . . that man must be the ruler in his own house." In other poems of Milton, notably *Lycidas* and *Samson Agonistes*, he finds closer integration.

Of Wordsworth: "*The Prelude* abounds in passages of dull or awkward narrative and reflection. The poet emerges when a skating experience, the vision of a mountain raising its head suddenly seen from a stolen boat, a girl's dress tormented by the wind, becomes a mystical, imaginative, spiritual experience." Whereas Milton "throws himself as passionately as Wordsworth" into the telling of his story, he does it "not in the same way, not intuitively recording the voice, as it were, of some inner revelation, but argumentatively." Milton's method was "that of a lawyer, accumu-

lating texts to establish each position." But in Wordsworth we get "more in the nature of the prophetic, intuitive feeling . . . for in that feeling Wordsworth found, after his period of *Sturm und Drang*, a message for himself and the world."

If you make a distinction, things are going best for your readers when you deal with antipodal cases. One has no trouble, for instance, in distinguishing roughly between a crop-report and a poem on the seasons, between a market-forecast and a prophecy of future redemption. Even here there is sometimes a margin of overlap, but the general tenor of your dichotomy is clear. If, however, you seek to maintain your distinction precisely in that area where the margin of overlap confronts you at every point, things don't go so well. And since both these poets were well acquainted with philosophical or conceptual vocabularies of motives (involving a reasoned criticism of social relationships), and since they necessarily wove such coördinates into their interpretations of human burdens and enjoyments, it seems to me that you are, by the very nature of the case, dealing primarily with the margin of overlap, precisely where the joys of the dichotomous are not. Thus, a reader trying to manage Grierson's distinction for himself, and noting in Wordsworth those flashes of recognition that Milton, with his lumbering and impersonal baggage, rarely attained, might place Wordsworth in the class of "what oft was thought but ne'er so well expressed"—yet this formula names the "didactic," of which Wordsworth is offered as the opposite.

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But though one may still be left feeling vague about the author's basic distinction, the book has incidental values that are considerable. Reading it somewhat as Grierson would read *Paradise Lost*, dividing the "message" from the "story," we find much material that provides suggestive perspectives for our contemporary exigencies. We see two earnest men each in his way building a structure that no one could take from him. Both had placed much hope in the regeneration of mankind through political expedients. For both, the ideals of liberation had strong connotations of evil. Milton's movement "toward the left" began in earnest with his heterodox views on divorce, thereby inaugurating his long guilt-laden list of refutations, defenses, apologies, and justifications. For Wordsworth, a similar movement was associated with his illicit love for Annette Vallon; hence "France of the Revolution his mistress was; England and her morals, customs, prejudices, became his wife."

Each had seen a revolutionary cause go sour; and each in his way worked out a poetic economy designed to take his disappointments into account. Milton ended by turning a project for the glorification of his cause into an indictment of mankind. Trained in the prayer and invective of the sermon, forever playing the organ of his sonorous Latinity (for if he wrote "as a lawyer," his legalism was theological, as far as possible from the secular style of Bentham), he enjoyed incantatory resources that could always enable him to keep a stake in the heavenly thunder. Hence, by identifying himself with the figure of Samson, he could profit by

the increment of such association, transforming something like vindictiveness (even sheer spite) into a partnership with Jehovah, God of wrath and justice. And if Milton, by equating his political issues with theological ones, had the theological resonance left when the politics was balked, Wordsworth seems in contrast to have found his solution in the role of prodigal son. He became the master of the "revisit." After a short period of over-generous spending, he returned home, to confess and repent and be reconciled. He became a child again, his strategy thereafter being to transform his politics in terms of *pre*-political imagery. He returned to mature his childhood, to take up where he had left off, his appreciation sharpened by the intervening excursion.

"Wordsworth," says Grierson, "in the years from about 1797 to about 1803, was like one who has been converted, or who has recovered his faith, and the poems he wrote are read with most understanding and enjoyment if one reads them as the outpourings of such a convert, a convalescent, the joy of a recovered faith in God which for Wordsworth is in Nature." "Man" and "Society" became merely adjuncts of "Nature"—and Nature was his parent hills, sometimes kindly, sometimes, as Grierson suggestively notes, threatening (as when, remembering his theft of a boat, he recalls how the "grim shape" of a peak "strode after" him). His love of simplicity (particularly where it approaches the state of "glee") suggests something like an adult cult of "baby talk." His recurrent sense of coming from another world



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was probably sharpened by his own ambiguous situation (in that he was now "back home," yet he was home as a "convert," so that the home was at once new and vestigial). His somewhat trancelike sensuousness suggests such well-being as an infant might express if it could do precisely what an infant by definition can't do: speak. And he was probably kept in this track by the fears and remorse connected with the "traumatic" interim in France.

So, in sum, we find assembled in this book the documents of two different strategies: How Milton persevered by annexing the very heavens, and their relevant sermonizing style, to sustain him in his unregenerate role as fighter. How Wordsworth "retrenched" by "symbolic regression," becoming, in Grierson's words, "a poet of joy, of recovered joy, of joy drawn from the purest sources" (plus, we might add, a series of financial breaks that enabled him to forget the social thunder beyond the hills).

This, I submit, is the "story" underlying Grierson's "message." Though it is not thus pointed by the author, it is there in his documents. It is important, I think, since we can find, all about us, variants of these two prototypes, with different degrees of thoroughness. The revolutionary situations under which Milton and Wordsworth wrote are in many notable respects different from the situation today. Hence, we may expect a correspondingly different formula for their encompassment. And critics on the look-out for the contemporary formula may find, in Grierson's book, "leads" that add precision to the search.

*Kenneth Burke*

## REVIEWS

### A SINGULAR TALENT

*A Trophy of Arms. Poems: 1926-1935*, by Ruth Pitter. The Macmillan Co.

Each of Miss Pitter's books has been introduced by prefaces: two by Hilaire Belloc and one by James Stephens. Belloc's preface to *First and Second Poems, 1912-1925* (1930) defined and praised "the classical spirit," and hailed its re-appearance, after long absence, in Miss Pitter's work. "The classical spirit," Belloc said, "has been forgotten. . . . It does not repel men, but it hardly attracts them at all: they can make nothing of it. The poise, the fulness, the solemnity, the disdain of sharp effect, the glory in control, all these [in poetry are] no longer conceivable."

Unfortunately, in 1930 Miss Pitter was not the mouth-piece of the classic spirit but an apprentice in its forms. She had gathered together a selection from poems written by her from the age of fifteen on (she was born in 1897). The exercises which so delight the ear of the beginner, the imitations so thrilling to the adolescent, and the efforts toward a unique and personal idiom, intoxicating to the 'prentice talent, all appeared in these pages. The poetic machinery creaked.

Here is bright dole  
And here are tears like rained gems,  
Like water on the velvet vole . . . etc., etc.

Such a book, presented so seriously under such auspices,

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was enough, very nearly, to make one give Miss Pitter up for good. But the collection was redeemed by two lyrics: *The Swan*, and the poem beginning

Youth has been storm and churlish scour of wind,  
Thin gleams, long rain,  
Steep roads and ragged rocks; all was unkind  
And much in vain.

*A Mad Lady's Garland* appeared in 1935. Miss Pitter had made great progress. She had caught up with, and surpassed, any praise Mr. Belloc might give her. In his preface to this volume, Belloc marveled at the combination, in Miss Pitter's work, of "a perfect ear and exact epithet." Both, certainly, were at work when Miss Pitter wrote the poems included in this delightful satirical bestiary, whose only fault was its at-times-tiresome mock-"olde" tone. She had emerged as an expert worker in formal metres.

*A Trophy of Arms*, which won this year's Hawthornden Prize, is a collection of her serious verse, written between 1926 and 1935. Its poems attempt, and for the most part are successful in, a wide range of effects both proper and foreign to English verse. She writes, for example, the English Sapphic (which must be looser and less dependent on classical quantity than the Greek) with ease and occasional fine success. She has Seventeenth Century music well under control. Yeats has drawn nourishment from these meters, and it is to Yeats that James Stephens, in his preface, compares Miss Pitter.

Feared and adored, the guest unsatisfied,  
Chaos derived, and destined to the abyss,

*A Singular Talent*

The key-stone of all mysteries,  
Scourge of the flesh and urgent guide,  
Why troublest thou me?  
Holding out crowns and stars, great wounds and flames . . .

This is the tone which gives birth to and conquers rhetoric, or else is conquered by it. Miss Pitter's ear saves her from its dangers. She does not swell it out to its fullest limits.

For her work is hampered by the two tendencies — formal and romantic-metaphysical — within it. She is often wrapt into contemplation of the soul's destiny, its jubilation, dangers, and peace. Wit, as is usual, accompanies this spiritual reconnaissance. But Miss Pitter is, at heart, too formal, too "classic," too detached, to carry her insights over into ardor. She can, however, write fine poetry. To watch her develop a theme, and touch in its detail warily but with richness and roundness, is an experience not often, nowadays, tendered to us elsewhere.

*Louise Bogan*

NOWHERES RAPIDLY

*New Directions in Prose and Poetry (1936)*. Edited with an Introduction by James Laughlin IV. New Directions.

We are, let us say, agreed with the editor's introductory pronouncement that "The world is in crisis, and language is at once the cause and the cure." We consider, however, that such a sentence is in itself a case in point of how language, loosely and somewhat absolutely employed, may furnish a gnomic scapegoat by which ambiguities are assigned habitations and names that are, in the end, less critical than

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"propagandic." There is no quarrel with the thesis that experimental writing provides catharsis for all the "visual and conceptual fronts of the congealed associations;" indeed, the present reviewer would insist that a wrenched image of Hart Crane's would, as Laughlin has it, sooner save the world than a sociological talk-fest by Edna Millay. Yet it is possible to get nowhere rapidly. And when one sets side by side the aims nominally espoused by the editor, with the interior evidence of the writing itself, it soon appears that a great many here present are interested in *novelties* of direction merely, others are wholly lacking in direction, and some few, like Cocteau, Stevens, and Williams, are weatherwise craftsmen whose chase has a beast in view.

Mr. Laughlin himself, turning from theory to practice, becomes less than graphic as a cartographer of the new country: "tongue ignorant tongue/find me the word I don't /care if you cut yourself/to pieces on my teeth just/find me this word. . . ." David Cornel de Jong in the same mood observes murkily: "Perhaps we may have braided the phrase for/those drooping from heaven, but perhaps/the birds, at that space were fervent/and so bitterly yellow, that/we must sit and remember;" nor is Eugene Jolas very helpful with his "O send us vocables of vortexflame and oorianian swift-verbs." William Carlos Williams, on the other hand, invokes "a cracking up of phrases which have stopped the mind" and practices it thereafter in a prose piece that is fresh, flying, and precise, and without the rhetorical stoppage which he deplures. Wallace Stevens continues the work of considered

*Nowheres Rapidly*

self-demolition begun in *Owl's Clover*, with a group of four poems deliberately inviting disharmony and bringing him close to the "coarseness" of Eliot's formal lyrics:

A lady dying of diabetes  
Listened to the radio  
Catching the lesser dithyrambs.  
So Heaven collects its bleating lambs.

Her useless bracelets fondly fluttered,  
Paddling the melodic swirls,  
The idea of God no longer sputtered  
At the roots of her indifferent curls, *etc.*

And when Cocteau has concluded his *pointilliste* tribute to Chirico (*The Laic Mystery*) he has earned the right to announce: "Goodbye reader, I am going to bed. I am ravaged by poetry as certain doctors are from using X-rays." The metaphor is always clinically correct; at one and the same time it defines a technique and suggests its disintegrative effect both upon the writer who employs it and on the work itself.

The remainder of the volume contains interesting poems by familiar figures (Marianne Moore, John Wheelright, Ezra Pound, and e.e. cummings) and by younger talents like Mary Barnard, who comments freshly on the impacts of the natural world, and Elizabeth Bishop, whose *The Colder the Air* is one of the most pleasingly turned lyrics in the book. Dudley Fitts is also present with a group of poems, many of them satirical; I confess, however, that I find the practice of employing the vernacular "dryly" a tiresome one, and Fitts's own finicky and bookish brand of bathos

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particularly dreary. In the department of prose, Henry Miller enacts an algolagnic dream against surrealist decor, much in the manner of his earlier *Tropic of Cancer*. Montagu O'Reilly appears with two prose items and is, we suppose, another surrealist, whose wares have the utility of furred crockery and the readability of newspaper *collage*:

These eyelashes [observes his heroine in an introspective moment], lips, and eyebrows have been exclusively historical. They have done splendidly, but really, they are far from being as quick as my hair. Accompany me to the garage, and you will see how the insane speed of my tresses annihilates all history.

Elsewhere, one Tasilo Ribischka unimaginatly parodies *Anna Livia Plurabelle* in a piece which reads like a Middle English glossary (of dubious authority) on an ether jag. Miss Gertrude Stein's five-finger exercise in tangential narrative might also be noted, if only for the protagonist whose penchant for playing "the piano and at the same time putting) cement between the keys so that they would not sound" is a fruitful comment on Miss Stein herself. The upshot of these several names, all of whom, presumably, bear their compasses in their saddlebags, I leave to the reader; my own guess is a traffic jam.

*Ben Belitt*

### THE CALIFORNIA CLASSICISM

*Twelve Poets of the Pacific*, edited by Yvor Winters. New Directions.

In this anthology Mr. Winters appears together with a group of younger poets who share his poetic convictions.

### *The California Classicism*

Opposed to the "obscurantism" of much modern poetry, they have renounced the French influence, so predominant in the twenties, and have returned to traditional English verse for models. Mr. Winters defines their chief aims as clarity of conception and purity of style. A more personal definition of his criteria, which may in general be taken as those of the group, appears in his critical study *Primitivism and Decadence*, where he posits the necessity for "spiritual control" in both the poet and his poem. By this we may understand a harmony and integration of all parts: a sensitive modulation of the mechanics of a poem to the spirit of its subject matter, a reconciliation of the poet's ambition to his capacity for expression, and a sure mastery over the complex relations between syntax and meaning.

But "spiritual control"—the fruit of exceptional maturity—is difficult to achieve, particularly for a group of young poets. It is hardly surprising that Mr. Winters and Janet Lewis, his wife, the eldest members, are the only ones who realize this ideal with any degree of consistency.

Mr. Winters seems to exercise this control best in his three poems dealing with Greek life and legend. In each of these there is a concrete dramatic framework that serves him in part as a ready-made discipline, a delimitation of attitude and material. *Theseus: A Trilogy* is admirably conceived and executed; there is eloquence without loss of precision, a largess of movement achieved without recourse to inflation, and at the end of the poem a terse finality, which, however, is marred by the faintly rhetorical last line: "To



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the cold perfection of unending peace." Deprived of dramatic incident, Mr. Winters tends to substitute the specious phrase, the inexact dramatic figure, often sacrificing his usual purity of style. Thus, from *John Sutter*, this figure about men in search of gold: "Measured their moods by geologic shocks"; or from another poem this ill-advised piece of alliteration: "Paradisaic in his pristine peace."

If I am not mistaken in my understanding of what Mr. Winters and his fellow-poets consider the *summum bonum* of poetic art, I should say that Janet Lewis has indubitably attained it. She displays a modest variety of forms, each perfectly controlled. Simplicity of spirit, reflected in simplicity of syntax and language, impart a kind of translucence to her verse, which far from being an effect of shallowness is a quality of her maturity of thought. In the three poems *Child in a Garden*, and particularly in *Lines to a Child* she achieves with quiet mastery what the other contributors so unhappily strive for: the eloquent economy of form and speech that characterize the best tradition of English lyrical poetry. The last two stanzas of *Lines to a Child* demonstrate her achievement:

The nourishment of which you taste  
Now as you close your eyes and sleep  
Is dipped from a profounder deep  
Than that with which our food is graced.  
The limbs grow softly smooth and bright  
That drink of it throughout the night.

My lot is shaped like yours, my days  
Toward an unwished sleep decline,  
And sorrowing I must resign

## *The California Classicism*

All treasures, music, laughter, praise.  
Come then, dear scholar, teach to me  
The grace that makes compulsion free.

A study of the other poets in this volume is less pleasurable than instructive. Their work displays the flaws and distortions of poetry written under a discipline that has been neither clearly understood nor intimately felt. In many instances the attempt to use the strict traditional forms of English verse has led to a ponderous formalism, a strange admixture of period styles, which assorts incongruously with the subject matter. In Mr. Stanford's *The Grand Mesa* the Colorado landscape is described in the language of third-rate romantic verse.

And there by night the ghostly lovers walk  
Filling the balsams with their sacred talk,  
Or in the later moonlight if they choose  
They ply the ripples in their light canoes.

Although there are "*an* hundred lakes" (incidentally "*sylvan*"), it is, for all that, "*a* hallowed place." In the midst of this mannered naïveté one finds the highly awkward and forced conceit of the noontide laying "its creeping wreath/ Clear mortal heat." In many of the poems incongruity goes hand in hand with clichés ("nascent future," "fickle glass"), Latinisms, unfortunate inversions ("Where scenes did not connive/ Our senses to enslave" or "while he spurns/ The slumber that all other creatures binds"). In Mr. Stafford's *Sonnet* one comes on the impossible image of "walls" of fog moving "like greedy moths to drain the

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... fragments of ... day." Barbara Gibbs' poem *The Well* describes a "Cold cylinder, of depth inviolate," which two lines later reprehensibly grows "moss-black feet." The same poem exhibits the almost unreadable lines: "Whose waters timeless blackness expiate" and "Nor know they there thy upright pride."

In the few good poems it is significant that the cumbersome mechanics drop away, letting emerge a native simplicity of speech and form. This is not to suggest that these poets should abandon all creative discipline, but simply that, with the exception of Janet Lewis, Yvor Winters, and to a lesser degree, J. V. Cunningham, they have not yet understood its peculiarly personal and organic nature.

*Philip Horton*

### COMMENT

POETRY offers this Twenty-fifth Anniversary Number to its old and new readers, with special acknowledgment to the friends and supporters of the magazine, as well as to the contributors, who have made twenty-five years of uninterrupted publication possible. We take occasion also to thank the guarantors and subscribers, some of whom have just recently joined us, for their share in making entry upon a new-quarter-century possible, and would urge all of POETRY's friends to extend their own and other readers' share in the magazine, in order that the desired stability may be won and a long-lasting security established for the future.

The autobiography of Harriet Monroe will be published this fall by Macmillan, under the title, *A Poet's Life: Seventy Years in a Changing World*. Miss Monroe wrote the final pages of her incomplete manuscript on shipboard in August, 1936, while on her way to Buenos Aires to attend the P.E.N. Congress. Two of her

editorial associates have arranged and completed the record, which covers the colorful phases of Miss Monroe's long life—her Chicago girlhood, her Eastern school days, her travels in Eastern and Western America, Europe and Asia, her share in the Columbian Exposition of 1893, the founding of POETRY, and the twenty-four years which she gave to the work and success of the magazine. The complete history of POETRY's career, which space prevents us from reviewing in this Anniversary Number, will be found by our readers within the covers of Miss Monroe's volume.

Eunice Tietjens, for twenty years a member of POETRY's Advisory Committee, will also publish her reminiscences this winter through Macmillan, under the title *The World at My Shoulder*.

The Hawthornden Prize was awarded in England this summer to Ruth Pitter, the poet who first appeared about twenty years ago in A. R. Orage's *New Age*, and whose two recent books, *A Mad Lady's Garland* and *A Trophy of Arms*, have been published in America by the Macmillan Co., the latter during the past summer. A review of it, by Louise Bogan, appears in the present number of POETRY.

The first issue of *New Letters in America*, edited by Horace Gregory, has recently appeared from W. W. Norton & Co. This "periodical in book form" will appear twice yearly in order to present unpublished verse and prose which "reveals a new awareness of society and a new and vigorous tendency in American writing." The first volume includes poems by Richard Eberhart, Naomi Raplan, T. C. Wilson, Arthur Abel Steig, Tony Palmer, David Wolff, Muriel Rukeyser, J. M. Brinnin, Winfield Scott, Kerker Quinn, Louis Grudin, Harold Rosenberg, Etta Blum, Emma Swan, Marya Zaturenska, Robert Fitzgerald, David Schubert, Lionel Abel, and Frederic Prokosch, most of whom are well known to readers of POETRY; fiction by eleven authors; criticism by William Phillips and Philip Rahv; and several contributions by foreign writers—W. H. Auden, Franz Kafka, John Hampson, and Louis Gilloux. *New Letters in America* resembles John Lehmann's similar English venture, *New Writing*, in its effort to give periodical form to longer pieces of contemporary craftsmanship. *New Writing* is now announced for American publication by Alfred A. Knopf.

The publication of the collected poems of E. E. Cummings, by Harcourt, Brace & Co., is an important event of the autumn. The publishers are also issuing a double-faced phonograph record of

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Mr. Cummings' recitation of a number of his characteristic poems — a valuable stimulus, we hope, to the further recordings by contemporary poets, particularly since Mr. Cummings' speech does excellent justice, in its deadly clarity and irony, to the quality of his verse. Thus far only the uncommercial recordings by Professor Cabell Greet at Columbia University of recitations by Lindsay, Teasdale, Eliot, Frost, and other poets of recent years have made use of a medium that has enjoyed considerable popularity abroad, especially in the discs made by Joyce (of *Anna Livia Plurabelle* and other passages from the *Work in Progress*) and by Edith Sitwell.

The *Collected Poems of Isaac Rosenberg* have just been published in England by Chatto & Windus. This book makes just and belated recognition of Rosenberg's remarkable genius, so tragically cut short by his death in the War. He received his only American publication in the pages of POETRY, and the files of the magazine still contain letters which he wrote from the trenches up to a few days before his death. The present volume has been prepared by D. W. Harding and Gordon Bottomley. A valuable essay on Rosenberg's poetry, by Mr. Harding, appeared in *Scrutiny* for March, 1935; unfortunately this has not been included in the new edition.

A highly interesting book called *51 Neglected Lyrics* has recently been edited by Tom Boggs, and published by Macmillan. Mr. Boggs has hunted down forgotten poems from the late Middle Ages to our own day, some of them of merely slight felicity, but others achievements which no lover of verse would do without. The book revives such poetic strays as *Tom of Bedlam*, the Elizabethan lutanists and madrigalists, hidden songs in Restoration plays, and fugitive verses by writers long since lost to fame. And it brings back to print the magical stanzas of *Wonders*, Thomas Weelkes' beautiful lyric from his *Madrigals in Six Parts*, published in 1600:

Thulé, the period of cosmography,  
Doth vaunt of Hecla, whose sulphurous fire  
Doth melt the frozen clime and thaw the sky;  
Trinacrian Etna's flames ascend not higher:  
These things seem wondrous, yet more wondrous I,  
Whose heart with fear doth freeze, with love doth fry.

The Andalusian merchant that returns  
Laden with cochineal and china dishes,  
Reports in Spain how strangely Fogo burns

Amidst an ocean full of flying fishes:

These things seem wondrous, yet more wondrous I,  
Whose heart with fear doth freeze, with love doth fry.

The Viking Press has now published the *Collected Poems of James Joyce*. This book reprints the *Chamber Music* poems, first published twenty years ago, and gives, for the first time in book-form in America, the *Pomes Penyeach*, thirteen lyrics issued as a booklet by Shakespeare & Co. in Paris in 1937. (Most of these, however, were first published in *POETRY* in 1917.) A recent lyric, *Ecce Puer*, a birthday tribute to Joyce's grandson, is also included. Word has also gone about that Joyce's *Work in Progress* is at last complete and will be published as a volume sometime during the coming winter. It has largely appeared in serial form in such magazines as *Le Navire d'Argent* and *Transition*, and in several small books, *Anna Livia Plurabelle*, *Tales Told of Shem and Shaun*, etc.

An interesting manuscript by Mallarmé has recently been published in Paris by Gallimard. It is *Thèmes Anglais pour toutes les grammaires*, a collection of a thousand English proverbs and sayings made as a text-book on the English language for the use of schools, and found among the manuscripts acquired by the Bibliothèque Nationale in 1935. This was a by-product of Mallarmé's long labors as a teacher of English in Paris, an exploration of those possibilities of language and communication which alleviated for the poet the boredom of the class-room. Paul Valéry, Mallarmé's son-in-law, has written a preface in which he speculates on the relation between these pedagogical duties and Mallarmé's poetic experiments, and on his conception of "une poésie qui fut comme déduite de l'ensemble des propriétés et des caractères du langage. . . . S'agissant de l'anglais, il tenta d'appliquer à l'étude de cette langue le sentiment infiniment délié qu'il avait des délicatesses musicales de la nôtre." Mallarmé published one English text-book for French students, and projected several more, and this newly published book is one of the projects that never saw the light during his lifetime.

W. H. Auden and Louis MacNeice have made a highly entertaining book of their *Letters from Iceland*, just published in London by Faber & Faber, and shortly to be issued in America. The volume contains personal letters, verse epistles to Lord Byron and other poets of past and present, a testament to the authors' con-

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temporaries, travel notes gleaned during last winter's Iceland journey, historical, geographical, and folk data, and an attractive series of informal photographs, the whole exhibiting as choice a wit as may be found in any literary production of recent years. Auden's poem, *Journey to Iceland*, which appeared in POETRY's English Number last January, furnishes the motif of the miscellany.

In Ezra Pound's *Polite Essays*, also published this summer by Faber & Faber, is collected a variety of his prose pieces and reviews of the past quarter-century: a *Note on Dante* from *The Spirit of Romance* of 1910, *The Prose Tradition in Verse* from POETRY of 1914, essays on Harold Monro, A. E. Housman, Binyon's translation of the *Inferno*, W. C. Williams' verse and prose, Mr. Eliot's *Solid Merit*, the preface to the *Active Anthology*, five or six papers on the state of modern education, and the complete text of *How to Read*. Pound's *Fifth Decade of Cantos*, also published this year by Faber & Faber, is now announced for an American edition by Farrar & Rinehart.

*The Partisan Review*, the left-wing political and critical monthly whose suspension last winter was regretted by many readers who had come to consider it one of the best magazines of its kind, will resume publication in November. It announces "no commitments, either tacit or avowed, to any political party or group," and promises to be "revolutionary in view, cultural in content," and "free of the debasements that commercial cynicism on the one hand and political dogmatism on the other impose on American expression." It will publish fiction, poetry, criticism, editorials, and communications, and will be edited by a board composed of F. W. Dupee, Dwight MacDonald, Mary McCarthy, George L. K. Morris, William Phillips, and Philip Rahv.

Frederic Prokosch, whose verse has appeared in *The Assassins* as well as in POETRY and several other American periodicals, is the winner of the 1937 Harper Prize Novel Award granted to his second novel, *The Seven Who Fled*. The judges of this year's contest were Sinclair Lewis, Thornton Wilder, and Louis Bromfield.

The Poetry Society of America has announced that its recent Lyric Prize has been awarded to Josephine Johnson, of Norfolk, Va.

Through a last-minute inadvertence in proof-reading the surname of the American critic, George Edward Woodberry, was misspelled on page 330, line 24, of our September issue. We would ask our subscribers to correct the reading of that line.

## Notes on Contributors

*Notes on Contributors:* The poets in this issue include both contributors to POETRY's earlier years and young writers of recent development.

Mr. Wallace Stevens, of Hartford, Conn., first appeared in the November issue of 1914, was awarded the Play Prize in 1916 for *Three Travelers Watch a Sunrise* and the Levinson Prize in 1920, and most recently appeared in these pages last May with *The Man with the Blue Guitar*, which forms the title poem of his new book, just issued by Alfred A. Knopf. His other books are *Harmonium* (1923; 1931), *Ideas of Order* (1934), and *Owl's Clover* (1936).

Mr. Carl Sandburg, of Harbert, Michigan, first appeared in 1914 with his famous *Chicago Poems* which won the Levinson Prize for that year. His most recent book is *The People, Yes* (Harcourt, Brace, 1936).

Mr. John Gould Fletcher, now again resident in his native Arkansas, has made many contributions of verse and criticism since his early appearances here under the Imagist banner, and was awarded the Guarantors Prize in 1916. His latest volume is *Twenty-four Elegies* (Writers' Editions, Santa Fe; 1935).

Dr. William Carlos Williams, of Rutherford, N. J., has also appeared often in POETRY since his early poems in our first volume. His *Botticellean Trees* won the Guarantors Prize in 1931. His latest book is a novel, *White Mule*, issued last spring by New Directions, Norfolk, Conn.

Mr. Horace Gregory, of Bronxville, N. Y., was first printed here in 1925. In 1928 he won POETRY's Lyric Prize and in 1934 the Levinson. He teaches English at Sarah Lawrence College and is the editor of the new book-form periodical, *New Letters in America*, the first issue of which appeared from W. W. Norton & Co. last month. His books of verse are *Chelsea Rooming-House* (1930) and *Chorus for Survival* (1935; both published by Covici, Friede), and *No Retreat* (Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1934).

Miss Louise Bogan, of New York City, first appeared in 1921, and made her most recent appearance here as poet with *The Sleeping Fury*, the title-poem of her latest volume, issued last February.

Mr. Robert Penn Warren teaches at Louisiana State University, is one of the editors of *The Southern Review*, and author of *Thirty-Six Poems* (Alcestis Press, 1936).

Miss Eda Lou Walton, of New York, is the author of *Dawn Boy*



## POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

(E. P. Dutton, 1926) and *Jane Matthews and Other Poems* (Brewer, Warren, Putnam, 1932). She is a member of the English faculty of New York University, and is at present working on a critical study of modern poetry.

Mr. Clark Mills, of Clayton, Mo., is this year studying in Paris on a fellowship granted by Washington University, from which he graduated in 1936.

Mr. Nelson Del Bittner lives in East Peoria, Ill.; Mr. Robert Friend in Brooklyn, N. Y.; and Mr. Rupert Hodge in London, England.

Mr. Harry Roskolenko lives in New York; Mr. Kenneth Slade Alling also lives in New York; Miss Jean Anderson, a new poet in this number, lives in San Francisco.

### BOOKS RECEIVED

#### ORIGINAL VERSE:

*The Man with the Blue Guitar, and Other Poems*, by Wallace Stevens. Alfred A. Knopf.

*The Collected Poems of Sara Teasdale*. Macmillan Co.

*Selected Poems*, by Allen Tate. Chas. Scribner's Sons.

*A Letter to Robert Frost and Others*, by Robert Hillyer. Alfred A. Knopf.

*Tomorrow's Phoenix*, by Ruth Lechlitrer. Alcestis Press.

*The Last Look and Other Poems*, by Mark Van Doren. Henry Holt & Co.

*Rowen, A Collection of Verse*, by Harold Trowbridge Pulsifer. Houghton Mifflin Co.

*Vision: A Poem preceded by an Argument*, by Parker Tyler. Priv. ptd., N. Y. C.

*Suspended Hour*, by C. H. Manuel. Priv. ptd., Boston.

*Fantasy and Fugue*, by Marina Wister. Macmillan Company.

*One More Manhattan*, by Phyllis McGinley. Harcourt, Brace & Co.

#### TRANSLATIONS AND A NOVEL:

*The Ten Principal Upanishads*, Put into English by Shree Purohit Swami and W. B. Yeats. Macmillan Co.

*Some Greek Poems of Love and Beauty*, trans. into English verse by J. M. Edmonds. Cambridge Univ. Press.

*The Tide of Time*, by Edgar Lee Masters. Farrar & Rinehart.

## *New Books of Poetry*

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#### ITINERARY, 1937-1938

November 5	.....	New York City, New York
November 7	.....	Wilmington, Delaware
November 8	.....	Columbia, South Carolina
November 9	.....	Charleston, South Carolina
November 11	.....	Savannah, Georgia
November 13	.....	St. Augustine, Florida
November 16	.....	Miami, Florida
December 4	.....	Atlanta, Georgia
December 12	.....	Wichita Falls, Texas
January 16	.....	Dodge City, Kansas
January 22	.....	Sioux City, Iowa
January 28	.....	Indianapolis, Ind.

#### COMMENTS

*John Hall Wheelock*: "I think poetry has seldom been set to music by a composer who was at once so impassioned and discerning. It was an unforgettable experience!"

*Margaret Widdemer*: "I think poets should realize the remarkable things Mr. Russ is doing for poetry — in the splendid array of artists presenting their work, and in what I feel must be an arduous and tremendous task of building up such an appallingly varied and magnificent program as I have before me . . . this is a thing very close to me, yet it is a national thing!"

*A. M. Sullivan*: "Mr. Russ is sensitive to the poem's right in the song, believing that the poet's idea, story and mood should be communicated, not distorted by music."

Elmo Russ' concert of his songs with Alfred Chigi, barytone, for Friday, November 5, Steinway Hall, New York City — announced September 1 — was half subscribed by September 15th.

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# THE CRITERION

A QUARTERLY REVIEW

EDITED BY T. S. ELIOT

*October, 1937*

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<i>Count Your Dead</i> .....	H. GORDON PORTEUS
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—*The Wilson Bulletin for Librarians* (July, 1937)

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# P O E T R Y

## A MAGAZINE OF VERSE

VOL. LI

NO. II

PRIZE-AWARD NUMBER

NOVEMBER 1937

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FOUR POEMS

ON AN OFFICIAL OCCASION

*("The Minister Plenipotentiary, in charge of the Spanish Embassy in Washington, will receive on the occasion of the First Anniversary of the Civil War in Spain, the representatives of the organizations sympathizing with the government of the Spanish Republic, at the Spanish Embassy on the evening of July 17th, 1937, at nine o'clock.")*

THIS elegant house the wealthy lady built:  
So perfectly appointed. Luxury. Grace.  
High ceilings, narrow panels, the dull paint;  
Parquet, mosaic, tile, and porte-cochère;  
Library, fountain, patio, and garden:  
Credit the house with all it meant to be, —  
Involute shell, ornate and beautiful.

[59]



POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

Here, without equipage or retinue,  
By bus and day-coach, four to the taxi-cab,  
Deserving people — strange diplomacy! —  
Presume to come, in comfortable dress,  
Passed by the butler and receiving-line,  
To fill the ball-room, hear the chamber-music,  
(The trio in white jackets at their playing!)—  
Listen to eloquence, for once be those  
For whom the sumptuous repast was spread.

Or simply go through hall and vestibule  
On the dark lawn, under the heavy trees,  
Pleased to move slowly, free from argument,  
Pleased to imagine our tall comeliness;  
Disturbed to find this hunger in the heart  
For ceremonial, for spacious ease,  
For conscience to forget tomorrow's meeting.

And comforted to know our kin are here.

O summer warmth! O decent human love!  
Here, in the shell of the old, the new world moving.

*Rolfe Humphries*

SONG FOR LATER SUMMER

Brown grain, yellow flower  
Ere the Autumn calendar :  
Quarrelsome voice, quiet heat  
Dry lawn, dust on lane and leaf.  
Noon hangs on from nine till four ;  
Air commands, Endure, endure !  
Man and wife, at end of day,  
Turning to each other, say  
How much earlier dark is here.

“ — NOT LOVE, BUT ARDOR ”

The eye, completely white,  
As in a statue's face,  
Requires the closing lid.

The wild, unholy shriek  
Cries out to feel the touch  
Before the full embrace.

And the poor mouth, unfed,  
Hungry in hope and darkness,  
Takes its profoundest kiss.

Not love, but ardor, this :  
Whereby we much improve  
The sickly wish of love.

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

GREEN MOUNTAIN SCENE

The wide air surrounding  
This soft female place,  
The open undulant hills,  
The naked chance of light,  
Meadow and mole and moss,  
The pretty little grove,  
The path, the secret road.

And the tall obelisk  
Dial to plain and mountain,  
Reminder to the sight  
And testament of men  
Where only humble males  
Tend car and furnace, till  
Garden, and water ground.

And the young devotees,  
Back to the grass, the hand  
Flung back above the shoulder,  
And the bent knee upraised :  
Europa's innocence,  
The heat of Pasiphae's  
Dispelled in thoughtful speech,  
Gone, to the wide air given.

*Rolfe Humphries*

Yard where no snow-white bull,  
With swollen dewlap goes,  
Meekly over the green,  
Garlanded, bright of horn:  
O Majesty! O Love!  
But serious ministers  
Serve in their several parts,  
Safe in their good behavior.

*Whom virtue gentles, rude  
To mock their decent ways.*

Pity. Reject. And praise  
The parlor by the track,  
The simple fuchsia grown  
Beneath the shade half-down:  
And praise the railroad yard,  
And praise the railroad whores:  
Praise ugliness for once,  
All that is barren, real,  
All that is tough and hard.

*Rolfe Humphries*

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

NEWS REEL

The tides beat up the shores of Spain,  
The loud, omnivorous breakers clash  
Like armies on the sand in vain.  
In blood and sun the banners flash.

Arenaed in a theater,  
Or through the arches of the press  
We watch the jungle-scene of war,  
We hear the screams of circuses.

This is the bread that Nero gave us,  
Pink candy for a headless child.  
It will take more than Christ to save us,  
Fools, by our own death beguiled.

*Marshall Schacht*

## SONG

Take the leaf falling now and autumn falling  
and the earth falling from the sun  
take the suburban Sunday afternoon  
the couples walking in the desolate park  
the wind's chill blowing on their flesh.

Or the city the scene of love affairs  
against a background of railed tenement  
and lamplit stone where the unemployed  
provide a chorus with appropriate gestures  
the begging hand the hopeless walk.

Cosy in coat and gloves we will watch winter  
turn down the sun strip the few trees  
gradually and drive the circling gulls  
upstream past wharf and factory  
to pick up a living somehow until spring.

*D. S. Savage*

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

TWO POEMS

TO AN AGING TENNIS PLAYER

Lay by your rackets now ;  
Not always to the net  
Follow the stricken ball,  
For game and set.

Harry the court no more  
With quartering stroke and stride ;  
The canvas sags with rain,  
The gut sings wide.

The pumping heart, the breath  
Caught short, spent limbs that bend,  
Clean triumph-smash and drive,  
These have an end.

Leaves drift to the lines  
Here in October haze ;  
Enough of strong delight  
And sunlit days.

Time's back-hand slice falls fair,  
His arm swings fast and loose ;  
Yield with all honor now :  
The score is deuce.

*L. Robert Lind*

TWELVE GAUGE SONNET

A man will hunt until he finds a rabbit,  
And drag his wet boots through the stalk-strewn fields;  
He will not strain against that primal habit,  
But scatter the death that every shotgun yields.  
Where the rail-fence and hedge-row come together,  
Man kicks the brush for what may hide beneath.  
Grey sky and frost and yellow-pumpkin weather  
Draw him again to brave the wind's chill teeth.

Nimrod of steel and powder, the corn-rows harry,  
Quarter the stump-field till your hands grow cold;  
For every rabbit that your coat may carry,  
One will go free to mock you when you are old,  
And, flaunting his white flag over the marshy hollow,  
Will leave you, in dreams vainly to thunder and follow.

*L. Robert Lind*



POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

THREE POEMS

GHOSTLY CONSOLATION

Now in a little time we breathe the gas;  
now in a little time the Goths outnumber  
the flaccid Romans, and our spires of glass  
splinter about the bodies that encumber  
our stairs no human foot survives to pass.

But even from decadence we extract  
— even as we falter in the devil rhumba —  
emancipation from some wormy lumber  
our attic-loading predecessors stacked.

Though we have earned the scorpion and the rod,  
we know that, while engulfed in dusk and umber  
our thigh bones work their way beneath the clod,  
we may sleep sound, unharassed in our slumber  
by writhings of a broken-hearted god.

OF WASTED TIME

Across **our** sonnet-scape they wing their flight,  
the little kiss god and his Cyprian dam;  
fleet the Eumenides pursue: bleared sight,  
brow-trenches, and a flabby diaphragm —  
which plunges sonneteer in piteous plight.

*C. Bradford Mitchell*

Then of her beauty does he question make ;  
yet, having proved it but a diagram,  
he falls to substanting his lovely sham,  
as dreamer his dream darling, half awake.

Gather we rosebuds! — but the day is late,  
the gardener goes armed, the great I Am  
will merely put us out and lock the gate.  
Safer to sup our consolative dram  
of ninety-five proof humdrum laced with hate.

#### SOLID GEOMETRY

##### *On Looking Into a Mirror*

This polyhedral figure which we two,  
doubled to four, inhabit for an hour  
daily explodes to send us whirling through  
spirals of fear and cylinders of power  
in the terrific sphere of gentle blue.

Each pattern fluid as a midnight wraith  
in turn dissolves its shelter as we cower ;  
single against the crash of dome and tower  
stands firm the tetrahedron of our faith.

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

Let neither separately from day recall  
his mirror self: not that bright death brings dower  
of torment; but that, lacking wall and wall,  
our pyramid, unsteady as a flower,  
will fall, and break the living in its fall.

*C. Bradford Mitchell*

FOR MY THIRTIETH BIRTHDAY

Seeing you again after so long not seeing  
What shall I say except that I find you changed?  
This is not the person I dreamed of, nor this the pattern  
Of life planned for you, jealously prearranged.

And this is sad, I say, that so many years of protest  
Leave you thus quiet, the heavy dark hair in place  
And nothing to speak of power in your light way of speaking  
Nothing to speak of tumult in your pretty face.

So this is you, I say; and my eyes reproach you  
For being so fashioned a creature of compromise.  
But here I stop, recognizing you suddenly, as I dreamed you,  
In these drowned, dissatisfied eyes.

*Savila Harvey*

## TWO POEMS

### UNDER

Under

in caves in hidden roots in slums  
in labyrinths of darkness  
in the damp jungle or the creeping swamp  
they move and the earth heaves and is frightened

under familiar hill and sea and ivory tower  
they move  
dense as the burning nucleus of a star  
their ecstasy their tongueless lamentations shake the trees  
blacken the sky

Time is not theirs their eyes  
their form  
a blind tormented Maelstrom  
slow coiling horror and fantastic joy  
no bomb can injure no sword break  
no Theseus  
no shafts of air  
pierce to the fetid lair  
no revolution  
hurls the great monster into light

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

tormented  
deeper than thread of thought will reach  
stronger than ugliness and beauty  
they wait  
and will not die.

RONDO AND GIGUE

Rondo and gigue and sarabande,  
The needle halts,  
The wind whistles in the icicles,  
The eye is dimmed.

There is a dance of death among the tulips,  
Two posters hover in the background,  
Poison looks in at the open window,  
And the stars are cold.

The moon gathers her long cloak about her,  
Her long banners streaming in the wind,  
Ice knocks at the door of summer,  
And the heart stops.

Crowds gather about the factories,  
There is a paper snowstorm at the Opera,  
And the old lady, a reader of Proust, stammers:  
We must be protected.

*Michael Roberts*

Slowly, the spring congeals, the mouth hardens ;  
Frost closes the passion-flower,  
Slowly, and a foliage of decency  
Falls, in the winter, in the hard season.

There is nothing to be afraid of in the silence,  
There is nothing at all to kill,  
The dagger has found its poisoned mark,  
And the eye can rest.

*Michael Roberts*

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

ROCK AND PAVEMENT

STORM OVER NEW YORK

The sky law is being laid down powerfully  
In these ragged flares of light that explode on the thick shade  
Which towering buildings lock with the midnight.  
And oceans of black sound hurtle along these byways  
As if the mouth of the sky were feeding contempt  
Into the steel and unmoving jaws of the city.

It is too good to hide from : with a smooth and willing engine,  
We lunge out into the rain and the thunder  
Seeing the wet street as a broad shore of light  
Through which shadows scurry their way with much noise.  
So give us much slanted rain and sound, Wind !  
Drunkenly try to tear apart these buildings  
That thrust with stolid demeanor for your clouds.

Wake, unsteady roof of the nightstorm.  
You cannot be more excited thunder and lightning  
Than my mind is, as it strikes into new pools  
Of the yellow glare on the wet pavements !

AQUARIUM

The sound of water and the people's talk  
Echo on walls where phantom forms are strung.  
It is a wavering dream through which I walk,  
And turn myself to see what life is swung

*Daniel W. Smythe*

With but thin effort. Life and death flare out  
With the shark's veering, the eel's slippery curve.  
Beyond the cloudy glass, I stand about  
And gaze at colors, and spears of fish that swerve.

The sea is here ; yet it is not the sea.  
Light and the shadows strike the sanded cage ;  
And the thick glance, the strangeness thrust at me  
Shoulders along its burden of calm rage.

I shall be silent through the galleries,  
Looking at things in water and air that pass,  
As if my thoughts were interlaced with these,  
As if a dream were misting walls of glass.

ON THE MAINE ROCKS

The hard wafers of rock tightly pinned on every side,  
I stand, facing the sea . . . The slash of the water,  
A moon with four slivers of cloud making a tree of light,  
Speckling the swells as far as I can see,  
Ocean and rock leaping together, sounding —  
Something of these I take to me.  
The black sides of the waves tower, fade out ;  
The light motions — and the water slaps down hard  
With long coiling tons of weight :  
A grey tide slowly moves its thunderers nearer my feet.

I think that my love for you is like this sea,  
Restless within me, shaking my body like mighty shoulders



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of an undivined power.  
I feel its echo in my heart; I hear its heavy tread on the  
flat wastes —  
A love terrible and searing, struggling its way  
And crashing on rocks within, as I stand with the universe  
moving about me . . .  
A love terrible as the sea, and like the sea  
Never to be satisfied or fulfilled.

*Daniel W. Smythe*

DISCOVERY

Two gleaming words cast up in conversation;  
A tale vaguely related by a friend;  
From these I mapped your country and foreloved  
Its air, grew restless for its exploration.  
  
I thumbed no lexicon for your gleaming words,  
No day-dream mistranslation feared. And now,  
Although the sun befriends me, I stand cold and puzzled  
Among your alien trees and unfamiliar birds.

*Rupert Hodge*

## TWO POEMS

### WHO WOULD BE VALIANT

Speak then in figures, trusting they will know  
    (But not too well) whereof we would attest;  
One should be delicate in grief although  
    The fox gnaws ever deeper at the breast.

Let us go robed in metaphor among  
    Our friends, the ripped flesh to itself resigned:  
They too hide wounds unnamed, even the young  
    Whose frightened eyes beseech us to be blind.

### SOUTHERN FARM

The corn is taller where the soy bean grows  
Heavy between the rows;  
The land is terraced, circling mounds of earth  
Insuring a season's worth  
Of kudzu hay whose tangled roots will hold  
From flood the humus gold.  
And on the hill beyond the covered bridge  
Is a small ridge  
Of seedling pine and locust. It was best  
To give the soil a rest,  
And plant new crops where always there had been cotton.  
But the old mules and I have not forgotten.

*Kathleen Sutton*

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ILLOGICAL DAYS

A SHORT STORY

This was when fathers were prophets and children dreamt,  
before bible or meaning,  
when the morning murmur was of children and rain,  
the sound of drinking good;  
when fiery cats walked in the field,  
tigers the same and friendly,  
their electric eyes burning in deepest greens.

Remember the foreign court of childhood  
and the ambassadors of buttered bread?

THE DEMON

The demon is knocking with illogical days —  
hear the buzzsaw, the familiar stir?  
The gates creak:  
Life the terrifying peeps;  
there is deathening music.

Canary,  
how can you live,  
singing each day!

*Sydney Salt*

TOY-SHOP

The skies lie broken,  
those of earliest colors  
and the later potted ;  
here a pincushion of stars,  
there the round patch of spilled yellow,  
often nicely propped in the heavens ;  
and, of course, the ever-moon,  
a more real ribbon,  
pale and blue enough for lady's hair.

A LOVE POEM

*For J. R.*

I saw flowers in your eyes  
and roots of flowers,  
and above, the heavenly surmise  
of sun ;  
I saw the golden petals fall  
and nameless other golden things.

Now, my forest of desire  
is the leaf of your smile.

*Sydney Salt*

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REPLY TO CENSURE

Repulse the staring eye,  
The hostile gaze of hate,  
And check the pedantry  
Of the inveterate

Defamers of the good.  
They mock the deepest thought,  
Condemn the fortitude  
Whereby true work is wrought.

Though just men are reviled  
When cravens cry them down,  
The brave keep undefiled  
A wisdom of their own.

The bold wear toughened skin  
That keeps sufficient store  
Of dignity within,  
And quiet at the core.

*Theodore Roethke*

## FOR MY PEOPLE

For my people everywhere singing their slave songs repeatedly: their dirges and their ditties and their blues and jubilees, praying their prayers nightly to an unknown god, bending their knees humbly to an unseen power;

For my people lending their strength to the years: to the gone years and the now years and the maybe years, washing ironing cooking scrubbing sewing mending hoeing plowing digging planting pruning patching dragging along never gaining never reaping never knowing and never understanding;

For my playmates in the clay and dust and sand of Alabama backyards playing baptizing and preaching and doctor and jail and soldier and school and mama and cooking and playhouse and concert and store and Miss Choomby and hair and company;

For the cramped bewildered years we went to school to learn to know the reasons why and the answers to and the people who and the places where and the days when, in memory of the bitter hours when we discovered we were black and poor and small and different and nobody cared and nobody wondered and nobody understood;

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For the boys and girls who grew in spite of these things to  
be Man and Woman, to laugh and dance and sing and  
play and drink their wine and religion and success, to  
marry their playmates and bear children and then die  
of consumption and anemia and lynching;

For my people thronging 47th Street in Chicago and Lenox  
Avenue in New York and Rampart Street in New  
Orleans, lost disinherited dispossessed and HAPPY  
people filling the cabarets and taverns and other people's  
pockets needing bread and shoes and milk and land and  
money and Something — Something all our own;

For my people walking blindly spreading joy, losing time  
being lazy, sleeping when hungry, shouting when bur-  
dened, drinking when hopeless, tied and shackled and  
tangled among ourselves by the unseen creatures who  
tower over us omnisciently and laugh;

For my people blundering and groping and floundering in  
the dark of churches and schools and clubs and societies,  
associations and councils and committees and conven-  
tions, distressed and disturbed and deceived and devoured  
by money-hungry glory-craving leeches, preyed on by  
facile force of state and fad and novelty by false prophet  
and holy believer;

*Margaret Walker*

For my people standing staring trying to fashion a better way from confusion from hypocrisy and misunderstanding, trying to fashion a world that will hold all the people all the faces all the adams and eves and their countless generations;

Let a new earth rise. Let another world be born. Let a bloody peace be written in the sky. Let a second generation full of courage issue forth, let a people loving freedom come to growth. Let a beauty full of healing and a strength of final clenching be the pulsing in our spirits and our blood. Let the martial songs be written, let the dirges disappear. Let a race of men now rise and take control!

*Margaret Walker*



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### ANNOUNCEMENT OF AWARDS

POETRY has the pleasure of announcing seven prizes this year — the longest roll of honors in the twenty-five years of its history. We list them with grateful acknowledgments to the donors:

*The Helen Haire Levinson Prize*, to be awarded for the twenty-third time through the generosity of Mr. Salmon O. Levinson, the internationally distinguished Chicago lawyer and publicist.

*The Guarantors Prize*, to be awarded for the twenty-fourth time; presented this year by the Friday Club of Chicago, a society of Chicago women which has financed, ever since 1922, a number of POETRY's prizes.

*The Oscar Blumenthal Prize for Poetry*, founded last year by Mr. Charles M. Leviton of Chicago, and to continue annually as a memorial to a great student and admirer of modern verse by his close friend.

*The Jeannette Sewell Davis Prize*, awarded for the third time, and to be continued annually by three friends of the magazine in memory of a lover of poetry.

*The Harriet Monroe Memorial Prize*, initiated this year by Mrs. Inez Cunningham Stark of Chicago, a friend of POETRY's founder and of the magazine; to be continued annually.

*The Harriet Monroe Lyric Prize*, founded this year through the generosity of Marion Strobel (Mrs. James Herbert Mitchell) of Chicago; to be continued annually.

### *Announcement of Awards*

*The Midland Authors Prize*, awarded for the seventh time to a young poet resident in one of the twelve central states which are represented in the Society of Midland Authors.

The editors and advisory committee of POETRY constitute the jury of awards. Poems by members of the jury are not considered for prizes. It has also been against our policy to repeat the awarding of individual prizes. Under this rule the following poets of our twenty-fifth year are *hors concours*: Wallace Stevens and Marianne Moore, for the Levinson Prize; Marya Zaturenska, for the Guarantors Prize; Marion Strobel, for the Blumenthal Prize; David Schubert, for the Davis Prize.

We proceed with the awards, which are made for poems printed during the past year in Volumes XLVIX and L of POETRY (October 1936 through September 1937), with reference also to each poet's general achievement or promise.

The HELEN HAIRE LEVINSON PRIZE of one hundred dollars, for a poem or group of poems by a citizen of the United States, published in POETRY during its twenty-fifth year, is awarded to

LOUISE BOGAN

of New York City for *Three Poems*, printed in POETRY for November, 1936, and reprinted in her recent volume, *The Sleeping Fury*.

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This prize has been previously awarded as follows:

- 1914—Carl Sandburg, for *Chicago Poems*.
- 1915—Vachel Lindsay, for *The Chinese Nightingale*.
- 1916—Edgar Lee Masters, for *All Life in a Life*.
- 1917—Cloyd Head, for *Grotesques*.
- 1918—J. C. Underwood, for *The Song of the Cheechas*.
- 1919—H. L. Davis, for *Primapara*.
- 1920—Wallace Stevens, for *Pecksniffiana*.
- 1921—Lew Sarett, for *The Box of God*.
- 1922—Robert Frost, for *The Witch of Coös*.
- 1923—Edwin Arlington Robinson for *Avenel Gray*.
- 1924—Amy Lowell for *Evelyn Ray*.
- 1925—Ralph Cheever Dunning for *The Four Winds*.
- 1926—Mark Turbyfill for *A Marriage with Space*.
- 1927—Maurice Lesemann for *New Poems*.
- 1928—Elinor Wylie for *Four Poems*.
- 1929—Marjorie Allen Seiffert for *Bread Out of Iron*.
- 1930—Hart Crane, for *The Bridge*.
- 1931—Edna St. Vincent Millay, for *Three Sonnets*.
- 1933—Marianne Moore, for *Part of a Novel, Part of a Poem, Part of a Play*.
- 1934—Horace Gregory, for *Men of Three Ages*.
- 1935—Mary Barnard, for *Spectral Tunes*.
- 1936—Robert Penn Warren, for *The Garden*.

The GUARANTORS PRIZE of one hundred dollars for a poem or group of poems published in POETRY during its twenty-fifth year is awarded to

W. H. AUDEN

of Harborne, England, for *Two Poems*, printed in POETRY for January, 1937.

This prize has been previously awarded as follows:

- 1913—Vachel Lindsay, for *General William Booth Enters into Heaven*.

## Announcement of Awards

- 1914—Constance Skinner, for *Songs of the Coast-dwellers*.  
1915—"H. D.," for *Poems*.  
1916—John Gould Fletcher, for *Arizona Poems*.  
1917—Robert Frost, for *Snow*.  
1918—Ajan Syrian, for *From the Near East*.  
1919—Marjorie Allen Seiffert, for *The Old Woman*.  
1920—Edna St. Vincent Millay, for *The Beanstalk*.  
1921—Ford Madox Ford, for *A House*.  
1922—Alfred Kreymborg, for *Pianissimo*.  
1923—Lola Ridge, for *The Fifth-floor Window*.  
1924—Amanda Hall, for *The Ballad of Three Sons*.  
1925—Leonora Speyer, for *Ballad of a Lost House*.  
1926—Agnes Lee, for *New Poems*.  
1927—Malcolm Cowley, for *Blue Juniata*.  
1928—Marion Strobel, for *Lost City*.  
1929—H. Boner, for *Memoranda of Various Phenomena*.  
1930—Abbie Huston Evans, for *On This Hill*.  
1931—William Carlos Williams, for *The Botticellian Trees*.  
1933—Elder Olson, for *Essay on Deity* and *A Novel in Pictures*.  
1934—Hildegard Flanner, for *A Ballad and Lyrics*.  
1935—Winfield Townley Scott, for *Biography for Traman*.  
1936—Marya Zaturenska, for *Everlasting Morning*.

The OSCAR BLUMENTHAL PRIZE FOR POETRY of one hundred dollars, for a poem or group of poems published in POETRY during its twenty-fifth year, is awarded to

THOMAS HORNSBY FERRIL

of Denver, Colorado, for *Words for Leadville*, printed in POETRY for October, 1936.

This prize has been awarded once before, as follows:  
1936—Marion Strobel, for *Lyrics*.

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The JEANNETTE SEWELL DAVIS PRIZE of one hundred dollars for a poem or group of poems by a young poet, offered this year for the third time through three friends of POETRY, is awarded to

WILLIAM PILLIN

of Chicago, for his group of three poems, *Walking Through Daylight*, printed in POETRY for November, 1936.

The HARRIET MONROE MEMORIAL PRIZE of one hundred dollars — to be given, at the judges' discretion, preferably for a sonnet or group of sonnets published in POETRY during its twenty-fifth year — is awarded to

FRANKLIN FOLSOM

of New York City, for his group of three poems, *A Room in a House*, printed in POETRY for June, 1937. This annual prize is inaugurated with the present award.

The HARRIET MONROE LYRIC PRIZE of one hundred dollars, for a lyric poem or group of lyric poems published in POETRY during its twenty-fifth year, is awarded to

ROGER ROUGHTON

of London, England, for his poem, *Tomorrow Will Be Difficult*, printed in POETRY for October, 1936. This award initiates the prize.

### *Announcement of Awards*

The MIDLAND AUTHORS PRIZE of fifty dollars, donated by the Society of Midland Authors for work by a poet resident in one of the twelve midland states, is awarded to

STEPHEN STEPANCHEV

of Chicago, for his group of four poems, *Facing the Day*, printed in POETRY for February, 1937.

This prize has previously been awarded as follows:

1929—Gladys Campbell, for *Seven Poems*.

1930—Polly Chase Boyden, for poems in POETRY.

1931—Robert Fitzgerald, for *Mutations*.

1933—Allen Tate, for *The Rooftree*.

1935—C. A. Millspaugh, for *Out of a Soundless Land*.

1936—Edward Weismiller, for *The Latched Gate*.

In addition to the above awards, the following poems receive HONORABLE MENTION:

*Entropy*, by John Mavrogordato (October).

*Rehearsal Against Time* (group), by Samuel French Morse (June).

*The Unerring Flower* (group), by Paul Eaton Reeve (August).

*Six Poems*, by Marguerite V. Young (March).

*Homage to Audubon* (group), by John Peale Bishop (February).

*Five for Jules Romains* (group) by Clark Mills (March).

*Scarabs for the Living* (group), by R. P. Blackmur (February).

*Inquiries* (group) by Frederick ten Hoor (November).

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*Song for the Times* (group), by Eli Cantor (October).

*Lanterns in the Wind* (group), by Sterling North (March).

*Two Poems*, by Winfield Townley Scott (July).

*Past and Present* (group), by Richmond Lattimore (February).

*Slow Invasion* (group), by Lola Pergament (May).

*Two Poems*, by Delmore Schwartz (February).

*The Hunted Voice* (group), by Elda Tanasso (April).

*On a Thread* (group), by Bertha Ten Eyck James (November).

*The Speaking Wind* (group), by Peyton Houston (December).

*How Otherwise?* (group), by May Lewis (November).

*Two Mornings and Two Evenings* (group), by Elizabeth Bishop (July).

*Lyrics* (group), by Laura Lee Bird (June).

*Within Be Fed*, by Kenneth Slade Alling (April).

While it has been our custom to give in our regular November Prize Award Numbers the full lists of awards in previous years, the length of these lists now prohibits a continuance of this practice. We must therefore refer our readers to the issue of November, 1936, for a complete list of poets honored by earlier prizes.

We again strongly recommend, to individual patrons and to clubs alike, the endowment of prizes and scholarships for poets similar to those given annually, in the larger American communities and abroad, to painters, sculptors, architects,

### *Announcement of Awards*

and musicians. The Guggenheim Foundation and the Pulitzer Prize — together with several special recognitions such as the Shelley Memorial Award (endowed by the late Mary P. Sears), the Hopwood Awards to students at the University of Michigan, and the hospitality of the McDowell and Yaddo Foundations — are the only public endowments which allow poets to enjoy their benefits, whereas large annual or biennial grants — \$1,000, \$1,500, and even much more — are permanently endowed in great numbers to reward excellence in the other arts.

In order to encourage such endowments, either as gifts or bequests, it is our custom to suggest two plans which offer as much freedom from local and conservative prejudices as any artistic endowment in perpetuity can hope for. We shall be glad to supply this information on request.

### THE PRIZE POEMS

According to our custom, we reprint a few of the shorter poems on which our awards are based.

We regret that lack of space prevents our reprinting the long poem by Thomas Hornsby Ferril, *Words for Leadville*; because of its special style and structure, it cannot be fairly represented by excerpts.



## POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

Of the *Three Poems* by Louise Bogan, we reprint one:

### THE SLEEPING FURY

*Rome, Museo delle Terme*

You are here now,  
Who were so loud and feared, in a symbol before me,  
Alone and asleep, and I at last look long upon you.

Your hair fallen on your cheek, no longer in the semblance of  
serpents

Lifted in the gale; your mouth, that shrieked so, silent.

You, my scourge, my sister, lie asleep like a child,  
Who, after rage, for an hour quiet, sleeps out its tears.

The days close to winter,  
Rough with strong sound. We hear the sea and the forest.  
And the flames of your torches fly, lit by others,  
Ripped in the wind, in the night. The black sheep for sacrifice  
Huddle together. The milk is cold in the jars.

All to no purpose, as before, the knife whetted and plunged,  
The shout raised, to match the clamor you have given them.  
You alone turn away, not appeased; unaltered, avenger.

Hands full of scourges, wreathed with your flames and your adders,  
You alone turned away, but did not move from my side,  
Under the broken light, when the soft nights took the torches.

At thin morning you showed, thick and wrong in that calm,  
The ignoble dream and the mask, sly, with slits at the eyes,  
Pretense and the half-sorrow, beneath which a coward's hope  
trembled.

You uncovered at night, in the locked stillness of houses,  
False love due the child's heart, the kissed-out lie, the embraces  
Made by the two who for peace tenderly turned to each other.

You who know what we love, but drive us to know it;  
You with your whips and shrieks, bearer of truth and of solitude;  
You who give, unlike men, to expiation your mercy.

## *The Prize Poems*

Dropping the scourge when at last the scourged advances to meet  
it,  
You, when the hunted turns, no longer remain the hunter  
But stand silent and wait, at last returning his gaze.

Beautiful now as a child whose hair, wet with rage and tears  
Clings to its face. And now I may look long upon you  
Having once met your eyes. You lie in sleep and forget me.  
Alone and strong in my peace, I look upon you in yours.

Of W. H. Auden's *Two Poems*, we reprint the first:

### JOURNEY TO ICELAND

And the traveller hopes: let me be far from any  
Physician. And the ports have names for the sea,  
The citiless, the corroding, the sorrow.  
And North means to all Reject.

And the great plains are forever where the cold fish is hunted,  
And everywhere. The light birds flicker and flaunt.  
Under a scolding flag the lover  
Of islands may see at last,

Faintly, his limited hope; and he nears the glitter  
Of glaciers, the sterile immature mountains, intense  
In the abnormal day of this world, and a river's  
Fan-like polyp of sand.

Then let the good citizen here find marvels of nature:  
The horse-shoe ravine, the issue of steam from a cleft  
In the rock, and rocks, and waterfalls brushing the  
Rocks, and among the rocks birds.

And the student of prose and conduct places to visit:  
The site of the church where a bishop was put in a bog,  
The bath of a great historian, the rock where an  
Outlaw dreaded the dark.

Remember the doomed man thrown by his horse and crying  
"Beautiful is the hill-side; I will not go":  
The old woman confessing: "He that I loved the  
Best, to him I was worst."

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For Europe is absent. This is an island and therefore  
Unreal. And the steadfast affections of its dead can be bought  
By those whose dreams accuse them of being  
Spitefully alive. And the pale

From too much passion of kissing feel pure in its deserts.  
Can they? For the world is, and the present, and the lie.  
And the narrow bridge over the torrent, and the  
Small farm under the crag

Are the natural setting for the jealousies of a province;  
And the weak vow of fidelity is formed by the cairn:  
And within the indigenous figure on horseback  
On the bridle-path down by the lake

The blood moves also by crooked and furtive inches,  
Asks all your questions: "Where is the homage? When  
Shall justice be done? O who is against me?  
Why am I always alone?"

Present then the world to the world with its mendicant shadow:  
Let the suits be flash, the minister of commerce insane:  
Let jazz be bestowed on the huts, and the beauty's  
Set cosmopolitan smile.

For our time has no favourite suburb. No local features  
Are those of the young for whom all wish to care;  
The promise is only a promise, the fabulous  
Country impartially far.

Tears fall in all the rivers. Again the driver  
Pulls on his gloves and in a blinding snowstorm starts  
On his deadly journey, and again the writer  
Runs howling to his art.

Of the group of poems by William Pillin, we reprint two:

### WILD BOYS OF THE ROAD

... for I remember eyes in which the States  
reflect their endless panoramic sweep. ...

A trekking caravan on narrowing trail  
of hungry urchins (subway, cell or slum)

## *The Prize Poems*

tramping past signboards, disinherited,  
dispersed for picking crumbs. Coast to coast  
the sod of neighing prairie darkly gleams  
with jungle fires, shelters for the night.

Crazed by nostalgia of benzine fumes,  
negro and yankee, jew and wop; they start  
with desperate zest but never to arrive.

Thunder of sierras, gusting gales,  
the dust of Arizona in their throats;  
tough harbingers of breadless days  
combing the piers, pleading on hostile streets  
nameless and homeless; hobo kids, young tramps  
whistling, intent against familiar jinx  
of badge and uniform near railroad ties;  
there is an absent stare in their eyes  
puzzled and ravenous: some day the trains  
will stop for them or else be dashed  
against their suddenly articulate demands.

### BRONZED MEN

After breathing the stale dust of cities  
which are faded rooms in an old building  
I have a clean and violent longing  
to find a long whiteness, to be among  
bronzed men living in brilliant daylight  
of a clay desert and black hills slanting.

O falcons aspiring to sun's laurel!  
Beware of the merchants who scribble  
on the blank pages of your lives  
till everything is paper and figures  
and the spilled ink is your death-warrant.  
They will bind you with a million gadgets  
till your muscle is limp among ruins  
for even the straight pillars of banks  
are ruins cluttering beautiful landscape.

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Be not caught in the terrible maze  
of traffic & lights & excavations  
& a million books & a million songs  
& dances in which only the feet whirl  
& kisses in which only the lips feel  
& autos & ugly clothing &  
methods & fashions & attitudes.  
Better to have only a pot and a basket  
than be distracted by tension of numbers.

For behold how between mountain snows  
and strong brown earth under clear skies  
a race of people lives in beauty  
sheltered in clay from cool winds  
that drift from the crags of the Smokies.  
With a few things to work with and poetry  
and a song that has tears in it and laughter,  
breathing like green trees, loving completely  
the bronzed man walking through brilliant daylight  
being naked and unburdened and beautiful.

Of the group by Franklin Folsom, we reprint two poems:

### AFTER MOVING TO A QUIET ROOM

Here purrs the pillowing kitten and we read.  
The room is radiated warm and walled  
against siren and tremble from trucks, which commerce-called,  
stagger below like pin-game balls that succeed  
at last in entering where no pins impede;  
our table baskets fruit, which yesterday sprawled  
Rubens-ripe in the market. We are installed.  
We smile for speech, and silence is agreed.

But thinking shouts down silence: word-tremblers tear  
our walls open for the quaking world to use  
the cracks in for gateway; echoes from everywhere  
over-run our room, and we pay dues  
in deeds to the trembling invaders. The kitten can spare  
the world, but we cannot so sinuously choose.

*The Prize Poems*

THE INTELLECTUAL IN 1937

Hammering shakes a house behind me —  
as weathered planks patch rotten ones  
and rusty nails pierce jamb and joint —  
dizzying the ants in the wood, and blinding.

Thus poverty, seeking to prop up age  
to linger on through a few more suns,  
adds vacuum to zero to decimal point,  
adds footnote to an empty page.

And the termites, forced from their tenement houses  
in the ancient wood, now riot-like  
go frenzying asunder here  
until some simple plan arouses.

And I, as the insects, shaken free  
from sagging structure, must learn to like  
the looking for new plans to engineer  
and better blue-prints to build on — bitterly.

We reprint the prize-winning lyric poem by Roger  
Roughton:

TOMORROW WILL BE DIFFICULT

White horses plunge hysterical through glass,  
And silent waters creep below the street,  
While falling thunder-clouds in valleys meet  
Where yellow fungus grows instead of grass.  
And iron figures waiting in the pass  
Stampede the shifting crowd that must retreat  
Before the agony, with burning feet,  
Across the barricades of broken glass.

Electric fingers clutch a waxen hand  
Which crumbles slowly with a sulphur smell;  
The stranger, wanting shelter, rings the bell,  
Repeating prayers he does not understand.  
Doors open, but the rooms are full of sand;

## POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

White bitter plants are climbing up the well,  
And in the night the graves begin to swell  
Until like sores they fester on the land.

*And these — the loved ones with the faded rose,  
The strong one not afraid of autumn light —  
Together will they understand the joke  
And save the Venus with the broken nose,  
When carefully the old man in the night  
Lets in the bailiff with the bloody cloak?*

Of the group by Stephen Stepanchev, we reprint one poem:

### THIS SISTER EVER

Brave creature, facing the day,  
turning in fearful need toward lightless hours,  
the morning risen once again in gray:  
who can surprise Medusa's force, who say to her  
go now, depart, present yourself no more?

We could demand a freedom from our fathers,  
a freedom from the blood, who could reprieve  
our wild sun-loving selves from out her hand.

The dark day opens now. We see the air  
sweep noisome streets. We click off bulbs.  
Doors creak; the latch falls; we are off: gone.

She stands at the turning with grimaces for our woe,  
with halting surmises. She stands on our palms  
painted with tongues. She peers from men's eyes  
with tauntings, humbling us to our fears.  
Our changes she confounds with opposites,  
stamping her name across our nameless brows.  
She lives no hermit among us, but everywhere:  
we know her strain at our arms, her sure  
painting of anguish in us with her needle brushes.  
Wherever we go she enters; she follows us in our dreams,  
and holds to us through the night, and rouses our sleeping clocks.

What knowledge can avail? To touch her hem,  
to stare upon her tortured face sets no pulse free.

## REVIEWS

### A DIVERSITY OF OPINIONS

*Conversation at Midnight*, by Edna St. Vincent Millay.  
Harper and Brothers.

*Conversation at Midnight* is that book which in its original form was, by a remarkable mischance, destroyed by fire and which, through an effort of memory as desperate as it was for long uncertain, has now been recovered. What could not be completely recalled, Miss Millay tells us in her Foreword, has been reconstructed; and some recent poems have been added. It would be interesting to speculate on what has been gained, what lost, in the process. But it would not be profitable. For once we have granted the poet her conception and allowed these conversations their tone, it is not easy to say how they could have been bettered. But when they are ended, long after midnight, when the shouts of the last quarrel have died down and the last good-night been said, if we are conscious of having been more amused than moved, of having been, in fact, continually diverted and scarcely moved at all, the fault is not in the talk. The fault is in the plan. And that, of course, must have been there from the start.

It was, to be sure, a tempting plan, to bring together seven men of almost as many occupations, as unlike in their opinions as in their positions, but all alike in being seriously



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concerned with the present disorder of the world. The host is Ricardo, who, though the son of a petty Italian nobleman, shows no Fascist adherence, but rather the subtle skepticism and aloof dignity of the aristocratic mind. It is to his house in Tenth Street, New York, that the others come. To no small extent, he is the arbiter of their differences and, more than any other among the characters, he seems to represent the controlling play of the poet's mind. He is, like most of his guests, in his forties. John, the gifted and unsuccessful painter; Pygmalion, a very successful, rather sophisticated, and on the whole obnoxious writer of stories for popular magazines; Carl, who is Communist and poet; Father Anselmo, who is Catholic and musician: all have reached that doubtful age when a man must know, if ever, by what force or reason he lives. Merton, the prosperous stockbroker, is there to represent wealth and the pursuits of the wealthy under Capitalism. He is sixty-eight, sufficiently sustained, and not only materially, but morally, by the substance of past accomplishments. It may be because he is a product of the past that he is less troubled than the others by present uncertainties. If he cannot be justified by his works, he will be by their profits. And as a matter of fact, he believes, profoundly, in the works. Lucas is twenty-five, in love, and unhappy. He is full of contempt for those corrupting words of the contemporary world, which, as in the advertising copy he writes for a little pay, are put between the populace and the objects for which they must be persuaded to give their money. Perhaps because of this, he has less to say than any

*A Diversity of Opinions*

of the other characters. Or it may be because he alone is young enough to survive on none but animal faith.

For it is in the demand and the desire for faith on the part of man that is found the center of all these conversations. "But you have time," Ricardo says to the priest.

Pascal had time; you all have time  
Who have the time to think.  
Your Church is built upon a rock of doubt,—on three  
Denials and a dozen hearts of little faith.

What a man believes, he lives with quietly. They build  
No Church upon the daily rising of the sun, who howl not  
With terror while the dragon eats the sun.

But of all these men, ironically, it is the Capitalist only who seems to be living with becoming quiet on his small faith and a large income.

The talk begins after dinner, harmlessly enough, with a discussion of quail-shooting and the training of hunting dogs. It continues, ranging widely, again and again is interrupted, lightly or angrily, is dropped by one speaker and taken up by another. It can go both high and low, be grave or ribald; it is frequently witty and not very often poetic; it is concise, apparently casual and convincingly masculine. The men, it seems, have little good to say of the women in their absence. On one occasion, Merton, Pygmalion and Lucas take on the rhymes and manner of Ogden Nash to do up the opposite sex, with such farcical force that henceforth it has almost no place in the conversations.

It is to faith they return. And since the speakers are of the contemporary world, and have met in New York, it is

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inevitable that sooner or later they should be involved in what was only a little while ago being proclaimed as a living faith. Carl still holds to Communism and precisely because he is a Communist shows himself alert to catch on any conversational hook to hang his undoubting argument. None is so slight, so small, but he can find a way to attach to it a great mass of Marxian doctrine. Possibly he is more fervid than orthodox. But then Merton, the capitalist, is in the room and serves continually to inflame him. The host is obliged to observe,

It is a pity these communists feel called upon to imbibe not only  
their morals  
But also their manners, from Marx;  
The grandfather of present-day communism regrettably has  
stamped his progeny  
Not only (and this only on occasion) with the broad philosophical  
brow,  
But also with the narrow humourless vanity and the shrill spite  
That marred somewhat his articulation then as now.  
He was a talented, intolerant, jealous, nasty old man.

This is a dramatic poem in the limited sense that each of the characters speaks from his own and not directly from the poet's mind. The case for capitalism could hardly be better put than Merton puts it, and the curious thing is that, for all that the Communist tells him that not only he, but the system that made him, fattening together, is now "so overweight it can hardly waddle," and promises both an early extinction,

If you have tears

For a prehistoric monster prepare to shed them now,  
For it's about to croak,

### *A Diversity of Opinions*

he leaves us with an impression of august solidity. Certainly he stands up under Carl's onslaught of argument and personal vituperation very much better than Carl's argument withstands the counterattack. Admirable he may not be, but solid Merton seems — and if this is odd in a stockbroker, I can only conclude that he represents not only the accumulated fat of capitalism, but even more the advantages of an undeluded, if somewhat limited, mind. Whereas in Carl, delusions have quite taken the place of thought.

Edna St. Vincent Millay has not been known for her lack of sympathy for those in revolt, nor has she been silent in her protests against an unjust and imperfect society. She has, I cannot doubt, put the best case she imaginatively could for Communism. But it would seem in this year of 1937 it is no longer possible for one of good will to put up a case for Communism. The argument depends too much on statements which resemble their father, the wish, far more than their mother, the fact.

Nothing could be more tempting than to bring together in a room a group of men and let each speak his heart out. For so the poet can give play to all the opposing opinions which, at any given moment, disturb his mind with claims and counterclaims. But in the end we are left with merely a diversity of opinions and there is nothing in literature that has less lasting power. This is not the first time the device of *Conversation at Midnight* has been employed and there are instances of its use which last. But if I may cite *The Courtier* in comparison, I think we can see that, though all

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the men and women gathered about the Duchess of Urbino have to say has an interest that is more than historical, at least while we are reading Castiglione's account of their conversations, once the book has been long closed, what remains in the mind is not so much what was so eloquently said, no, not even the wonderful discourse on love that only ceased when the candles had turned pale in the dawn, but the emotion with which the author has been able to endow his characters. But they were not only names. They were those whom Castiglione had known, honored, loved, and all, or nearly all, when he wrote were gone in death. Out of all the discussions about the courtier, nothing stays longer than the passionate and poignant cry, "The Duchess, too, is dead." And it is precisely that feeling for her characters that is lacking in Miss Millay's book. They are dramatized points-of-view. What they have to say matters, on occasion, no doubt, matters profoundly. But they are all argumentative. And I am inclined to think that even now it is as dangerous to argue in poetry as ever Queen Elizabeth once made it out to be in the presence of princes. *John Peale Bishop*

### AN END TO THE ABSTRACT

*Out of the Picture*, by Louis MacNeice. London: Faber & Faber.

"So you think it is all a matter of love?  
And what do you think love is a matter of?  
Matter is the word for it."

In this way, Venus begins her damnation of the human ✓

*An End to the Abstract*

race for the neglect of life. It is a long speech, and a good one, but not any better than many others in this play which is perhaps the most remarkable of all the new poetic plays.

It was inevitable that Louis MacNeice should write a play, not for fashion, but because his own peculiarly dramatic sense (in poems like *An Eclogue for Christmas* and *Eclogue by a Five-Barred Gate*) demanded a longer form, and greater play between opposing forces. Thus, in *Out of the Picture*, the promised farce turns to tragedy, and the adventure of Moll O'Hara which began with the attempt to save her lover's single completed picture, ends with her murder of Portright, artist and lover, and the destruction of Paris as the last gigantic peace conference fails. In the meantime, the ordinary in life shifts to the extraordinary; the final ludicrous nonsense is uttered, the last apologies and excuses are made. At the end, Moll says, "I will give you sons. Good luck go with them." After her, the Radio-Announcer speaks:

"Walk among statues in the dark,  
The odds are you will break your neck —  
*Here ends our hoarded oil.*"

But the author cannot wish more than good luck. He is too honest to pretend he can see through the fog; his hopes lie most in a revitalization of man by man's attending to his own business, by getting out of the air and back to earth.

The mechanics of the play are well handled, and it should be effective drama in production. The long-rhythmed, lithe verse which MacNeice has made his own is the more remark-

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able here, the clear and precise imagery is very fine, and if one remarks resemblances to the plays of Auden, it is not improbable that these men see things from somewhat the same angle, though the results are individual. Not only has Classic English drama made its contribution to this revival, but Gilbert and Sullivan have added their share. It would be helpful for writers like Maxwell Anderson to read *Utopia, Ltd.*, if only for exercise.

There must be something to laugh at, if one is to cry. *The Dog Beneath the Skin* had its mad-house scene, and *Out of the Picture* has the auction with its "Hymn of the Collectors," the sale of the Hoptonwood Stone elephant and of Portright's masterpiece to Clara de Groot the film-star (for three guineas and her autograph). When Portright kills Sir Sholto Spielmann, minister of peace, and one of the direct causes of the war, the resolution and succeeding events are prepared for and inevitable, much more so than if the author had cried through the first act.

There remains only the chance to give one or two more samples of the poetry. This, from Moll's speech between the acts:

"The world runs at hazard, we must counterfeit,  
Affect to copy the world, let chance do all it likes,  
Give whom it will for parents or for lovers,  
Mark out the field with accidental landmarks,  
And we will do the rest.  
Action is the cream of life and we will act  
By our own rules on any stage we strike."

And this, spoken by an unseen chorus:

## *An End to the Abstract*

"Shall we remember the games with puffball and plantain,  
Searching for the lost handle to the silent fountain,  
Hiding in the shrubbery, shutting our eyes and counting?

Shall we remember the marigolds parading,  
Smell of grass and noise of the corncrake railing  
And the fun of dragging a stick along the paling?"

Louis MacNeice has come a long way from *Blind Fire-works*. Let us hope he will go still further.

*Samuel French Morse*

### SENTIMENT AND FORM

*Poems 1929-1936*, by Dudley Fitts. New Directions.

Had this collection of poems appeared ten years ago it would have been accorded a more enthusiastic reception than it will probably get from most quarters today. I make this observation at the outset not to pre-judge Mr. Fitts's accomplishment but rather to indicate that an estimate of his verse is apt to be based to too great a degree upon his limitations, which are, at the present time, more readily discernible than his virtues. This may be a commentary on the poet as well as on his readers; it is also the result of changing tastes and fashions. The very qualities that Mr. Fitts will be censured for today are those that would have won him praise a few years ago. Which of these two opinions is right is not the issue. Both, if offered as critical evaluations of Mr. Fitts, must be rejected because both are founded on but a single aspect of his verse. His other, less obvious qualities have not been considered. And these are the qualities which give his verse whatever individuality and eloquence it may have, as



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they are the ones which, in an age that perhaps unavoidably lives by absolutes, are most likely to be overlooked.

Nevertheless, Mr. Fitts cannot be absolved of all responsibility in this connection. Since 1929 poetry has undergone a definite and inevitable change of outlook—a change marked primarily by an increased concern with moral, social, and political problems. The poet's sympathies and interests have altered; he has come to hold a different conception of his function, of his relation to his age. Not so Mr. Fitts, whose poems, though written since that date, reflect sentiments and perceptions more characteristic of the previous decade. They are sentiments that found fullest expression in the work of Pound and Eliot. Like these men, many of whose stylistic traits he has taken over (as witness his falling cadences, esoteric allusions, and juxtaposition of classicism and slang), he voices an attitude of disillusionment and despair tempered by irony and wit. But because he is writing at a later point in time, that is, at a time when these sentiments have lost their *raison d'être*, he is unable to bring to them the same vigor and conviction. Whereas Pound was disgusted and Eliot agonized by contemporary brutality and anarchy, Fitts tends to exhibit boredom and polite cynicism:

—Our sawdust blood asks nothing. We who ask  
ask nothing. We who hear in the sudden drum  
within us only the jazz of marathon-dancers  
pumping a witless tempo

have become  
calico sphynxes for a Saturday masque:  
There are no fortunes and no answers.

This note is struck repeatedly; it might be described as the

### *Sentiment and Form*

poet's theme-song. There is an acquiescence in defeat, an absence of struggle, that make for a certain narrowness, self-sufficiency and, at times, complacency.

Mr. Fitts is least successful when his disillusionment is self-conscious rather than lyrically spontaneous, when it seems the result of an attitude rather than of assimilated experience. In most of the longer poems — *Chant Dissident* is perhaps the best example — the sentiment is offered as a quasi-philosophical commentary, is conveyed through abstract rather than sensory terms. In the short lyrics, however — and Mr. Fitts's talent is essentially a lyric one — the emotion is objectified; there is unity of sentiment and form. Here the poet contents himself with the presentation of conventional moods such as nostalgia and melancholy and achieves a coherent and convincing poetic statement. The poetic personality is not diffused through any contradiction between approach and expression. *Alborada del Insomne*, *Ya se van los pastores*, *Fifth Anniversary*, and *The Angel of Goodbye* reveal Mr. Fitts at his best. They stand above changing tastes and fashions and comprise an authentic contribution to the lyric verse of our day.

*T. C. Wilson*

### LILLIPUT

*Prismatic Ground*, by Marguerite Young. Macmillan.

The Muse, disgusted in an age barren of most things poetic, has lately turned her back on lyric poetry to give us a spate of something else. But when one is wallowing in a deep of stream-lined streams of consciousness, to find a book

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of clear-voiced lyrics is a treat. It is like looking up between skyscrapers at the Dipper in the night sky.

As frequently, distinction is achieved in *Prismatic Ground* by ignoring the trend of fashion. The poems in the book are not personal, except as they reflect an individual mind. They are objective and varied — arranged carefully so that each lyric stands by itself instead of blurring into a sequence of similar thought. This, I think, is proper in a book of short poems of irregular lengths and varying motifs. Like beads on a string, they make a unity, but may be counted off separately, enjoyed and remembered alone.

The author's main trick of craftsmanship is a Katherine Mansfield way of making the tiny thing momentous by surrounding it with subtleties of connotation implied but never stated. Picking her way with sure but delicate footsteps among all sorts of fragile images, she leads us through plenty to starvation and makes us like it. Meanwhile we find ourselves by a miracle grown so small we can look up through waving grasses to the immensities of butterflies' wings, glow-worms, wild crab-apples, blue field-mice, and all earth's obscure and humble creatures.

In Lilliput where  
The night is a firefly  
And the wild grasses curve  
Obscuring the sky . . .

. . . .  
In Lilliput  
The lady died.

and all things being relative, a death in miniature seems here as important as a holocaust.

This method has its dangers. Sometimes the deliberate search for esoteric properties shows through the lines. There is a limit to the number of odd and beautiful things one may use in a poem. If Miss Young sometimes gets caught with a surplus, however, she has illustrious apologies and examples in the work of Léonie Adams and Elinor Wylie. It is necessary to be adroit, to dilute the concrete with metaphysics, to use the brittle and temporal not for itself, but only to suggest the imperishable and eternal. This, the author of *Prismatic Ground* has learned:

Chiselled immaculate in sunlight, heavy  
With waxen leaves and clear-cut bloom,  
Yet by the moon drift persuaded, the pear tree  
Has branched in shadows through her room.

So thick is the flower of the wild white bough  
Mirrored in her still sleeping now,  
No one can tell which is the tree  
Of bloom reflected, which is she.

Occasionally, in these poems, there is a technical sleight-of-hand which leads the reader to expect regularity in rhyme or rhythm and gives him neither. The result is not disappointment, but an amused surprise:

Indeed the populace is largely  
Composed of fowl and creatures  
Four-footed. It would seem to me  
Small for heaven's fires. . . .

In another book, Marguerite Young will probably be more sparing in her use of legend and fantasy. Perhaps she will become an artificer less like Cellini and more like Da Vinci. If she keeps her queer magic her readers will follow her happily out of Lilliput into a larger country. J. N. N.

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### AN ANNOUNCEMENT

Having brought POETRY through its most tragic and critical year, Morton Dauwen Zabel has asked permission to retire to the Advisory Committee in order to carry on more fully his creative and academic work. The editorial duties of the magazine have always demanded a sacrifice of time and energy on the part of the distinguished writers and critics who have served on its staff. In the face of such a request we have no choice but to comply, while hoping that we shall not lose altogether the advantages of Mr. Zabel's collaboration. George Dillon, who has headed our Advisory Committee for some years, becomes Editor with this issue.

### NEWS NOTES

We record with sorrow the unexpected death, on October 12, of Frances Shaw (Mrs. Howard Van Doren Shaw) of Chicago, one of POETRY's oldest and most valued contributors. This news reaches us as we go to press. There is thus no time to review the long history of her friendship with the magazine, or to express adequately what POETRY owes to its association with her rare personality and serene spirit. One of her last acts was to send us a gift, on October 11, with these words: "The magazine has my good wishes as it always has had."

Since the earliest days of Harriet Monroe's enterprise, her delicate and truly felt stanzas have often appeared in these pages. Few poems that we have presented have been so much quoted and anthologized as her brief lyric, *Who Loves the Rain*, first printed in POETRY for March, 1914. Her most recent entry was the numbered sequence of poems, *To Death*, published in June, 1937. Of this sequence, we reprint the last poem, which may indeed be the last she wrote:

## *News Notes*

When I am close to you,  
And your bright hair is stirred  
By even my lightest breath,  
I could not be so glad  
Unless I knew of Death.

Death the Uniter . . .  
When our world is done  
No trick of age shall part us,  
We are one.

When I am close to you,  
And your bright hair is stirred  
By even my lightest breath,  
I could not be so glad  
Unless I knew of Death.

In Frances Shaw, Chicago loses a beloved and distinguished citizen,  
and POETRY a most loyal friend.

. . . . .

The Poetry Society of America announces that candidates for the Shelley Memorial Award of 1937 are now being considered. The jury consists of Dr. Elias Lieberman, Principal of the Thomas Jefferson High School, Dr. Howard Baker of Harvard University, and Mrs. Roberta Swartz Chalmers of Kenyon College, Ohio. According to the will of Mary P. Sears, the jury is to select some living American poet, with reference to his or her genius and need, this poet to receive the current year's net income from a trust fund of \$20,000. Suggestions and information are to be sent to Dr. Elias Lieberman, Thomas Jefferson High School, Brooklyn, New York.

Three painters have been appointed by the Federal Arts Project to do a series of murals for the new Post Office in Decatur, Illinois. These murals will be designed to show the political history of the state, its social and industrial development, and its natural and human resources. Mr. Edgar Britten, the distinguished young Chicago artist, having undertaken to picture the resources of his state, has wisely included among these the arts. To represent

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poetry he has chosen Carl Sandburg. We heartily applaud this choice, which will seem the inevitable one only to those unacquainted with official honors.

Mr. Ted Malone, who reads poetry every day on the radio, is offering a daily prize of ten dollars for the best poem received. Manuscripts, which will not be returned, must be original and unpublished. Each must be typewritten on a separate sheet of paper bearing the author's name and address, and mailed to Mr. Malone in care of the Columbia Broadcasting System, 485 Madison Avenue, N. Y. C. It is assumed that each poet grants permission for the use of his poem on the air, whether it wins a prize or not. Payment of the prize constitutes purchase of the poem, which may also be used in a monthly page of poetry conducted by Mr. Malone in the *Pictorial Review*.

As a happy contrast to the cheap banalities which are usually given to radio audiences under the name of poetry, we are glad to note that Padraic Colum, the well-known Irish poet and dramatist, has inaugurated a series of poetry readings over the NBC-Red Network. These may be heard every Monday at 1:00 p.m. and every Friday at 12:45 p.m., eastern time. Mr. Colum shares the program with Joseph White, the Irish singer once celebrated as "the Silver Mask Tenor."

Under the sponsorship of the Academy of American Poets, a memorial fund in honor of Elinor Wylie is being collected, through a large committee of writers and admirers, for the purpose of founding an annual fellowship for the benefit of American poets. An appeal has been broadcast, and several readings have been held in New York toward raising the first contributions to the fund.

We take pleasure in welcoming a mid-western contemporary, *The Beacon*, Chicago's new liberal monthly edited by Sydney Justin Harris, which began publication in June with offices at 160 N. LaSalle Street. No magazine of this character ever entered a more virgin field or faced an icier challenge. Well edited and vigorously written, *The Beacon* bids fair to be equal to its opportunities. Among contributors to the October number are Governor LaFollette of Wisconsin, Robert Morss Lovett, and Ira Latimer. Chicago has long needed such an organ, dealing tersely and uncompromisingly with matters of the first importance, and including book-reviews and other features. We wish *The Beacon* a long life and a large circulation.

### Notes on Contributors

Mr. Rolfe Humphries, of New York, is well known as a contributor of verse and criticism to periodicals. He has been active in the League of American Writers, and was co-editor of the recent anthology of Spanish war ballads, *And Spain Sings*.

Miss Margaret Walker, who makes her first appearance in POETRY, was born in 1915 in Birmingham, Alabama, and went to school in Mississippi, Alabama, and Louisiana. She has done social service work in New Orleans and Chicago, and in 1935 was graduated from Northwestern University, where she was a member of the campus Poetry Society. She is now employed on the Federal Writers' Project in Chicago, and is working on a novel.

Mr. Michael Roberts, of London, England, was the editor of our most recent *English Number* (January, 1937) and is the author of *Poems* and *The Critique of Poetry*, both issued by Jonathan Cape. Last year he edited the *Faber Book of Modern Verse*.

Mr. Marshall Schacht, now resident in New York, was born in 1905 in Brookline, Mass., and was educated at Dartmouth and Harvard. He has contributed to many magazines, including POETRY.

Theodore Roethke, another well-known contributor, was born in Saginaw, Michigan, and was educated at the University of Michigan and at Harvard. He is now in the English Department at State College, Pa.

Mr. D. S. Savage, who is also known to our readers, was born in 1917 in Essex, England, and now lives at Enfield, Middlesex.

Mr. L. Robert Lind is a professor of Classics, English and Romance languages at Wabash College, Indiana, and has published verse in POETRY as well as *The Sewanee Review*, *College Humor* and other journals. He has a volume of poems ready for publication.

Mr. Sydney Salt, who has returned from Europe to New York, is at present living at Woodstock. The Caravel Press of Palma, Mallorca, published his *Thirty Pieces* in 1934, as well as a volume of stories, *Contemporary Legends*.

Mr. Daniel W. Smythe lives in Haverhill, Mass., and has contributed to *Scribner's*, *Harper's*, *The American Mercury*, and other magazines, as well as to POETRY.

Mr. Rupert Hodge, whom we introduced last month, was born in London in 1908, and has "lived a quiet unexciting life" in that



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capital. He has not yet published a volume of poetry.

In addition to Miss Walker, the following poets make their first appearance here in this issue:

Mr. C. Bradford Mitchell was born in New Bedford, Mass., and now lives in Boston. He spent six years teaching at the University of Delaware.

Miss Kathleen Sutton lives in Anniston, Alabama. Savila Harvey (Mrs. Winfield Townley Scott) lives in Providence, R. I., and has "published almost no poetry since several years ago at Pembroke College."

This month's prose contributors are well known to our readers: John Peale Bishop lives in South Harwich, Mass.; Samuel French Morse in Danvers, Mass.; Philip Blair Rice in Cincinnati, Ohio; Winfield Townley Scott in Providence, R. I.; T. C. Wilson and Robert Fitzgerald in New York City.

### BOOKS RECEIVED

#### ORIGINAL VERSE:

*Cold Morning Sky*, by Marya Zaturenska. Macmillan Co.

*The Story of Lowry Maen*, by Padraic Colum. Macmillan Co.

*The New World*, by Edgar Lee Masters. Appleton-Century Co.

*On My Way*, by Marion Canby. Houghton Mifflin Co.

*The Gardener Mind*, by Margaret Haley. Yale University Press.

*The Hills Grow Smaller*, by Zoë Akins. Harper and Bros.

*Mirror to Mortality*, by Martha Keller. E. P. Dutton & Co.

*Road to America*, by Frances Frost. Farrar and Rinehart.

*The Everlasting Minute and Other Lyrics*, by Louis Ginsberg.

Liveright Pub. Corp., N. Y. C.

*Love of Earth*, by Marguerite Scribner Frost. Poets Press, N. Y. C.

*Flame Against the Wind*, by Florence Wilson Roper. Wings Press, N. Y. C.

*Eggs in a Blue Bowl*, by Dion O'Donnol. Wagon & Star, Los Angeles, Calif.

*Sprays of Goldenrod*, by Letitia P. Hardesty. Stratford Co.

*It Was Wisdom*, by Krebs Friend. Margent Press, N. Y. C.

*Alcazar*, by Egerton Clarke. Burns, Oates & Washbourne, Ltd., London, England.

#### A TRANSLATION:

*Lament for the Death of a Bullfighter and Other Poems*, by Federico Garcia Lorca, in the original Spanish with the English translation by A. L. Lloyd. Oxford University Press.

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of Poetry, published monthly at Chicago, Ill., for October 1, 1937.

State of Illinois, County of Cook. Before me, a notary public in and for the State and county aforesaid, personally appeared Geraldine Udell, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that she is the business manager of Poetry, and that the following is, to the best of her knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management, etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the Act of August 24, 1912, embodied in section 443, Postal Laws and Regulations, printed on the reverse of this form, to-wit:

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Sworn to and subscribed before me this 13th day of October, 1937.

ARTHUR SUNDIN.

(My commission expires January 14, 1941.)

# THE SOUTHERN REVIEW

*Published Quarterly by the*  
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## In the Autumn Issue:

DONALD DAVIDSON: Regionalism as Social Science

CRANE BRINTON: Socio-astrology

LINDSAY ROGERS: Personal Power and Popular Government

SIDNEY HOOK: Liberalism and the Case of Leon Trotsky

R. P. BLACKMUR: Emily Dickinson — Notes on Prejudice and Fact

JOHN PEALE BISHOP: The Strange Case of Vardis Fisher

JOHN DONALD WADE: What the South Figured (1865-1914)

Reviews by F. O. MATTHIESSEN, JAMES T. FARRELL,  
MARK VAN DOREN

POETRY, FICTION

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### *Spring, 1937*

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*Donald Davidson*

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The Poet as Woman, by  
*John Crowe Ransom*

Old Mortality (a long short  
story), by *Katherine Anne*  
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### *Summer, 1937*

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**ELMO RUSS**, whose concerts of his songs set to American poetry have been a unique feature of New York's musical life for the last five years for the first time is now available for appearances out of New York City. His concerts in New York City have been scenes of artistic triumph; his patrons have numbered, among others, such noted people as: Eleanor Roosevelt, Mrs. Francis Biddle, Cora Smith Gould, Antoinette Scudder, Elizabeth Coatsworth and the late Edwin Arlington Robinson. Press comment on his work has been voluminous.

#### ITINERARY, 1937-1938

November 5	_____	New York City, New York
November 7	_____	Wilmington, Delaware
November 8	_____	Columbia, South Carolina
November 9	_____	Charleston, South Carolina
November 11	_____	Savannah, Georgia
November 13	_____	St. Augustine, Florida
November 16	_____	Miami, Florida
December 4	_____	Atlanta, Georgia
December 12	_____	Wichita Falls, Texas
January 16	_____	Dodge City, Kansas
January 22	_____	Sioux City, Iowa
January 28	_____	Indianapolis, Ind.

#### COMMENTS

*John Hall Wheelock*: "I think poetry has seldom been set to music by a composer who was at once so impassioned and discerning. It was an unforgettable experience!"

*Margaret Widdemer*: "I think poets should realize the remarkable things Mr. Russ is doing for poetry — in the splendid array of artists presenting their work, and in what I feel must be an arduous and tremendous task of building up such an appallingly varied and magnificent program as I have before me . . . this is a thing very close to me, yet it is a national thing!"

*A. M. Sullivan*: "Mr. Russ is sensitive to the poem's right in the song, believing that the poet's idea, story and mood should be communicated, not distorted by music."

Elmo Russ' concert of his songs with Alfred Chigi, barytone, for Friday, November 5, Steinway Hall, New York City — announced September 1 — was half subscribed by September 15th.

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# P O E T R Y

## A MAGAZINE OF VERSE

VOL. LI

NO. III

DECEMBER 1937

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### SEVEN POEMS

#### THE LABORATORY MIDNIGHT

SCIENCE is what the world is, earth and water.  
And what its seasons do. And what space fountained it.  
It is forges hidden underground. It is the day's slow salvo.  
It is in the closed retort, and it is not yet.

It looks up and counts the perseids in August,  
A fire from nowhere like signals in the sky  
And it looks for portents, as redmen on a hill,  
In the white stream where Altair swims with the andromedae.

Now you who know what to believe, who have God with you  
By desk and bed, blue fire in the stove,  
Whom the rains from the northeast alter, but perfect,  
Into new powers, and new pities, and new love;



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Go look in lava flows for newer elements,  
And dismantle the electric shape of matter like a house;  
And weigh the mountains in small pocket scales;  
Break buds; inquire into the senses of the mouse;

And if you are unpanicked, tell me what you find  
On how the sun flies, and the snow is spent;  
What blasts and bessemers we live in, that dissolve  
All the loam loaned to spine and ligament.

THE GAME

The stadium gates are opened  
And the young are gathered  
In a sea-voiced generation  
From the hills and from the towns,  
Unanimous as this monument  
Whose arch looks in on playing  
That the blue sky honors  
And the birched hill crowns.

The Indians gathered here to see,  
When woods were red before,  
The sacerdotal contest  
That the warriors turned to play  
While the leaf was hesitating,  
And the cold sky waiting  
For the first snow to fall,  
As these watch here today.

*Reuel Denney*

Here too have come  
The feet of our own generation  
To tread another season down  
And here their word is spoken  
Like one wind from a forest  
That has grown up thick together  
Before its own October blows  
And the stems lie broken.

The girls are pinned with berries  
And the men wear feathers  
And who will not be smiling  
When the packed stand roars,  
When the city is wearing its autumn  
Like a happy decoration  
For the game and the gathering,  
Not deaths of men in wars?

#### THE DANCE

Dancing is not to deny  
How richly men could put away  
Howitzer and torpedo, nor make fun  
Of hoppers in a bad world broken.  
Anyone knows the waste of youth  
By bald-head and by custom.  
For child unfed, for fair man dead

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We hear no strong word spoken,  
Nor for, tomorrow, his son grown.  
And anyone knows how states compound,  
Going rotten in their power,  
Old evils with much quicker new ones.  
He sees the crack draw, hour by hour.  
And yet the dancer still thinks that disaster  
First in the womb still fastens  
The leg that has not run,  
The heart not yet begun.

THE SLEEPING WOMAN

*For Johnny Keller*

Liberty's a sleeping woman,  
Sitting in the mountains  
In the altitude's sere tangle,  
And her marble knees are chilly.  
Streams beyond the railroad lines  
Find in her breast their fountains  
But central has no numbers there;  
The lands between are hilly.  
The great knees shift the shadows  
In between them, and the morning  
Pearls both of them with mist

*Reuel Denney*

But the sybil still stays voiceless ;  
Secure there from the choppers  
And the highways and the powerlines,  
She still repines unvisited  
And sleeps beyond the farthest blazes.

If, with a pouch of pemmican,  
Skis maybe, and a rifle,  
We went into the ranges where  
The beavers wear their thickest fur  
We could not really find her  
Before the snow blocked all.  
But surely we would meet there  
Faces that we had always  
Understood in happy dreams  
As also empty for the vision ;  
And far from their own mothers,  
And lost to their own houses,  
They would speak of the old towns  
As soon as of that woman.  
And yet, with each memory  
Of long-past comfort and composure,  
Eyes would turn forest-ward  
And hands caress the compass dial  
And faces would lean as eagerly  
Toward peaks as here on Sunday  
The great crowd on Main Street  
Turns to the evening movie stile.

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Each would, within the wild,  
Find it a sweet magnetic field  
That drew his restless particles  
Toward peace beyond the rise;  
Waiting as one waits for morning  
When the city's deep in sleeping  
For, when most impossible,  
Her wild, magnanimous eyes.

THE IROQUOIS

Once all these cities knew the Iroquois.  
Their knives were sharp. They packed a wicked arrow.  
They had the roads, the salients,  
Chose their allies,  
Met once a year, with names of gods familiar,  
In a long house of bark,  
Curing the thongs of policies.

None now who press their urgent motors over  
The asphalt trail of the lank, long-sprinted messengers  
Use in their mouths the old address  
Or ceremonial idiom  
Of those red border guardians,  
Except to name a lake they know by night-time passages  
in train,  
Mixing the westward whistle's sound with syllables still alien.

*Reuel Denney*

Yet, safe a hundred years from Mohawk murder,  
Must men within the city wake from the quick routine  
As in the woods men woke, reaching for gun and horn?  
For not in the summer leaves of hardwood over the murmur  
Of the stream that turns and turns Ontario-ward  
Is it a flintlock set that makes men wary,  
Belly to ground and breathing mint  
In a thicket by some ford.  
But the men of industry at war  
Fight like sons of the Iroquois.

THE OLD NORTHWEST

Near Pittsburgh, seeing the way we came,  
How far our wheels would be by night,  
We counted the waters that descend  
Those valleys where our border was.  
Beside that hill Ohio drew,  
From corn-root southward to the cane,  
Monongahela's fresheting,  
And Alleghany, mountain-bound.  
The slow climb of the evening  
Recalled our painful history;  
The wind, advancing, was delayed  
Like sonorous music underground.  
Amos the wheel-wright lay below,

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With the bent dream of the idiot —  
Stones glazed in the eroding snows,  
Blue shadows of the winter's sun.  
That churchstep where none stayed to speak  
Of what quick wind was in the trees  
Was not much use to country men  
For whom no forecast knotted brow  
With dread of empty granaries.  
Under the sunken sod below  
Lay Federalist and Republican.

MCSORLEY'S BAR

Mac had a place to drink and talk downtown  
Where only men were welcome, or grown boys.  
When the grey snow flew there was the forum stove  
Where arguments were slow, and out of noise.  
The dust was old as Sumter, and the talking  
Had never stopped since Dixie went to war,  
And all the men from Grant to Hayes to now  
Had lived beside, been buried from that bar.  
There, in the evening, the city carpenter  
Bumped up a drink with one of Croker's men  
And politics and poetry were one  
From supper time until it closed at ten.  
The grey-haired men considered from their chairs  
How time is emptied like a single ale.

*Reuel Denney*

Their china eyes saw tabby woo the fire  
As men their recollection at the rail.  
Here, among blackened walls, men's time  
Flowed past like peaceful dreams of Chinamen  
Who sit in temples thinking of those flowers  
That die, and live, and close their blooms again.  
Here the day's passions, after dusk,  
Would, while the children called beneath the L,  
Draw in like coals in pipes to gleam in silence  
Between the words that cursed or wished them well.  
Privilege and extortion and corruption  
Or the wreck of the city or some way to power  
Described the moving lives of living men  
In voices where each hero had his hour.  
And sorrow that rendezvoused in here  
Flowed like a stellar scheme whose dying ions  
Flow down to night when orders somewhere else  
Gather the suns like a summer's dandelions.

*Reuel Denney*



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SUBSTRATUM

Fire masked by falling snow,  
love is not enough, I know:  
fiercer sources underneath  
have that burning core for sheath.

Though the governing heart decree  
what the bloodstream's tide shall be,  
unaware, our pulses ride  
out of Ocean's stronger tide.

Not that strength will falter here,  
constant in its war with fear,  
or your steady household arm  
fail beneath time's load of harm.

But the struggles, mine and yours  
and the worse our kind endures,  
pierce our surest faith, to reach  
strength not even love can teach.

Passionate, unreconciled,  
stitch the garments for our child  
with that rhythm Ocean gave  
life engendered in its wave.

*William Stephens*

Antedating civil shame,  
nurse him at volcanic flame;  
rear him at that social hearth  
rock-built on the upheaved earth.

*William Stephens*

### SPOKEN AT YULETIDE

This box of spice uncover with a reverent hand;  
Such did the Three Kings bear Him, padding through the  
sand.

Sing as you mould your pastry, sing peace again on earth —  
In a crib like this His mother laid Him at His birth.

Hang high above your door the oak-fed mistletoe.  
Tonight the Lord God wears the flesh His creatures know.

Shake out the cloth and set the board with rarest food;  
Mary may tire of angels; wine will do her good.

Then light the candle at the window: it will show  
Far through the dark. He has a tortured way to go,

So keep the log ablaze, but hearken while you wait:  
Soft falls the step of Peace amid the bombs of hate.

*Mary J. J. Wrinn*

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AT THAT POINT MR. PROBUS

TIME AS A WELLSPRING

I thought, said Mr. Probus, there was time,  
Time by the dipperful, time lipping, flowing  
Out of some plenteous spring where I'd be going  
With my bright dipper, frosting it with rime,  
Hoarding no more than God would hoard a dime,  
Slipping time over my palate, careless blowing  
Drops off my moustache, wasting it, well knowing  
There would be more, more always, soft and prime.

I've been some years at Stringtown, Probus said,  
Back in the mountain, mining molybdenum,  
Gassed and sent in again and lined with lead.  
Six years some few will last who stand the gaff.  
Sometimes where the machines bore, springs will come;  
I have to laugh, he said, I have to laugh.

LUNCH TIME IN THE TUNNEL

I have my castle, Probus said, and when  
I shall have done with this godawful hole,  
Broken my pick and shinnied up the pole,  
I shall go forth and view its spires again.  
And I shall hit the trail across Peak Ten  
And down along the river air my soul,

*Belle Turnbull*

Till pinned to heaven itself pricks up the goal,  
With the brown cabin under, Probus' den —

So man the pumps, he said, and tallyho!  
Heave up the anchor, gentlemen, for now  
We move to disembugue the old she-cow,  
The gangrened guts of Satan's so-and-so.  
Judas arch-hellion intercede for us  
Who ditch our dreams to muck out Erebus.

LYRIC MOOD

Nan, Mr. Probus said, you want a spring  
Right in your room, to cool your little hot breast  
And wash your mouth, that mouths like mine have pressed,  
With clean wild water, for the bright blood-sting  
On your rose-tallowed lips. My sullied wing,  
My overlaid, my thumb-worn palimpsest,  
I'll choose the iced, the prime, the liveliest  
From my blue valley for your sweetening.

Have your lips known a spring, he said, your feet  
A spring? We've hot and cold, she said, you know  
Miss Mae don't let we girls go off the Street  
Dabbing around in springs. You old sourdough,  
Where is this place you wash your feet in, dear?  
Away from here, he sighed. Away from here.

*Belle Turnbull*

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

NOTE

You see no storm; but blurred,  
A cloud obscures my eyes.

Cruel bird  
Intones its doubts and lies.

Cruel bird torments my love  
Whose beak a smile can still:

A dove  
Can hunt this crow — and kill.

Dispell the cloud with sun  
For when the blue is clear,

The one  
Assurance slays all fear.

To solve me, try to feel!  
My eyes, a printed page

Reveal  
My doubts, my love and rage.

And you may sense a fire!  
For how else can it be?

Desire  
Is what sets passion free.

*William Pillin*

If in your heart disdain  
For passion makes a breach,  
                    Again  
Restraint is yours to teach.

No two are ever matched  
As buds together grown;  
                    Detached,  
Your inward eye may frown.

But I must strike a flame  
Or else forget the flare.  
                    Your name  
Continues sweet and fair.

Forgive what you must prove  
Or if I place a burden:  
                    My love  
Must weed its garden.

*William Pillin*

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

TWO POEMS

A PRAYER FOR RESPITE

Come, Babe of God, come light the Christmas candles!  
Come as you come in England; winter rain-storms,  
And that sharp questioning around the heart,  
Drown with old carols. Deck the country churches  
With prickly holly; deck the Christmas tree  
In all its three-times-lovely Woolworth glories;  
Bring Uncle Santa Claus, and break our silence  
With children's voices. Babe of God, come home.

A WISH IN A MUSEUM

I wished along the plains of time  
Lay scattered all that harvest cold:  
Iron earth slow drinking back the spear  
Where death unloosed the Roman's hold.  
I wished the legend garlanding  
The carven cup that once held wine  
Lay, knotted round with living roots,  
In shards beneath a southern vine.  
I wished the Pharaoh, million-wound  
In spicy linens, bedded deep  
Under his chambered pyramid,  
In timeless air his court might keep—

*Mary Charles*

Far seemlier if all these had found  
Their natural bed when all was done;  
The slow-devouring fruitful ground,  
The slow-consuming fruitful sun.

*Mary Charles*

## TO AN ARTIST IN THE MACHINE AGE

This arid interval that you deplore,  
This gray world set with circumjacent night,  
Spreads out an empty canvas to invite  
Your sultry soul, whose radiant signature  
Is hidden and still withheld. Why fret for more  
Audacious patterns, more incisive light?  
Why chafe at level hours, or crave the height  
Of instants other men have reached before?

Take up the stiffened brush, be quick, be bold!  
Magenta, sapphire, sulphur-green and red  
Are here at hand. Cherish this moment; none  
But this is yours. Even now the arrow is sped,  
Feathered for you with ultimate dark and cold.  
Twist the last tube and paint a rising sun!

*Emma Gray Trigg*



POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

IMPROVISATIONS

SUNRISE

The small origin of dawn pushes outward,  
devours softly and in all directions  
the last traces of night. Mercilessly  
it releases light's runners, sounds  
the anvil of day with its red hammers,  
announces in an incredible burst of sunshine  
morning: in a silence lovely and more significant  
than a monument.

ANOTHER MORNING

I love to watch darkness sprint towards day:  
Swift as runner arrives bearing  
a message of morning.

Dawn brightens our brains  
who have slept beneath stars: in the  
morning it steals under lids of eyes  
and like lost swimmers we rise upward  
through subterranean pain.

*Norman Rosten*

FANTASY

Clouds are not weak:  
Fast as they form and fade  
only the swiftest wind can burst  
their sculptured seams!

I have watched them mass in noon battalions  
or at dusk become tall strong steeples  
tolling the silent sky.

I WITNESS A DEATH

Almost in agile surprise that the front wheels  
of the truck missed: but the rear ones  
passed ponderous and elate over the cat's body.

Stricken, she would not accept aid.  
After some calm nerveless gestures of paw,  
she rose beautifully from pain, left the road  
and walked with death proudly like a queen  
into the shade where she died sleeping.

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FOR HEDDA

Morning meets memory  
and kills it. We all know  
much forgetfulness at this hour:  
piety is put out like stars.

This much man has told  
in his loving: daylight is the  
great destroyer of evening words.

(Yet I know that sleep is lived through  
and comes again as real: the long night  
foretells a strange morning fidelity . . .)

CENTRIFUGAL

Birds in clusters sweep the sky:  
in centrifugal beauty they war on the sun  
and race around invisible pylons  
without losing even one brave companion!

Starting from their leader's signal  
they V upward swiftly and then explode  
like a giant star, streaming cold  
eyebrows in every delicate direction!

*Norman Rosten*

LET ONE SPARK FAIL

The tireless black pistons are wristed  
without agony to its steel crankshaft.

Now the machine is at rest: six messengers  
of speed have no complaint with gears,  
they are in static glory!

Now they move: iron lungs inhale and exhaust.  
But let for one moment fail a fragile spark  
to thrust them in cycle, and the proud function  
is doomed, all its good power journeyless!

AESTHETIC

Flight is the bird's value:  
starting parallel with water, rising  
breaks his definite shadow, high  
he soars over the evening's valley.

We know him by motion: his beauty  
is parting from pond, sharp wheel  
of the white belly burnished in dusk,  
the untiring path into the hills.

Movement alone in his great honor.

*Norman Rosten*

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NOW MUST THE HUNTSMAN

Now must the huntsman test the worth  
Of that known skill he reckons by;  
Hearken beside your sheltered hearth  
And you will hear the hue and cry

Loud through the fields and up the road,  
See hound and horse and shining leather,  
The rider sparing not the goad —  
All in the gay and golden weather!

All in the golden weather, soft,  
Through bush and brake the small feet padding  
To win some warren or some croft . . .  
The peril and the constant adding

Of death to death — the deer that blow  
When any human insult rankles  
Within their breasts, brought sudden low —  
Grim harvest of those flying ankles!

Hear in the brush the startled quail  
Involved in queer and bloody scrimmage,  
And all the woods as brown as ale  
Where falls the little body's plumage . . .

*Amanda Benjamin Hall*

The marsh duck the decoy has drawn  
To death — too clever to alarm her —  
(How beautiful the hills of dawn,  
Discovered each like Fujiyama.)

This is the time the hunter loves  
To be abroad, his old lust whetted  
To halt whatever wild thing moves  
In amber forests, shadow-fretted;

This is the time of man's delight,  
The rifle and the heavy gun,  
Of creatures running hard for fright —  
(Listen, and you can hear them run . . .)

*Amanda Benjamin Hall*

## THE VILLAGE IN THE MOONLIGHT

The village in the moonlight seems  
Asleep within a world of snow,  
The snow of silver seen in dreams,  
And half forgotten, long ago.

There is no sound across the night,  
No leaf that stirs, no wind that sighs,  
Only this flood of silver light,  
On meadows silver as the skies.

*Mabel Simpson*

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

TWO POEMS

I

See the sculptured head  
The yellow waxen wave of hair  
The chiselled eyes, the flawless skin  
Early toasted in the sun  
See the certain stride  
The perfect form at playing tennis  
Studied pose at tea-room tables  
Conscious disregard of glances  
See this cultivated flower,  
Hybrid of society,  
This has taken generations  
Is the perfect specimen  
According to the formula.  
The lovely child has learned his part  
Exceptionally well, we think,  
Offending no one when he makes  
His inconsistent kind remarks  
But indicating mild assent,  
With easy smiles, to all opinions.

Oh the waste, when someone someday  
Lurking somewhere in the weeds

*Bryant Morey French*

Will ask the unwanted question  
Demanding a positive answer,  
The silly child that we have made  
Forget the lines created for him  
Faint before the hungry eyes.

II

Slow though we are in ideas of affection,  
Help us achieve more inclusive love  
Free us from venal devotion and faction  
That we may act in the moment we have.

Help us prevent the inflexible barrier  
Keep from the grip of the rigid man;  
While no occasion for us to be sorrier  
Raises the sight of its accurate gun.

*Bryant Morey French*



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TWO POEMS

VIRGIN IN GLASS

*Laurentide Mountains*

The little virgin, fitted out in white  
Behind the glass  
Set in the center of the cross's height,  
Inhabits quietly her novel plight  
Far from the Mass.

Above her head the symbols of the Line —  
Carved arrow,  
Pincers and hammer — lie within the sign  
Of a thorn circle, cut in blunt design,  
Wooden and narrow.

Below her sheltered perch the jagged rocks  
Girdle the cross;  
Serenely pink-cheeked in her little box  
She gazes wisely on the winter fox,  
The summer moss.

She was installed with wreaths and holiday  
In bright July,  
Blessed by the priest, pleased by noise and play;  
Priest, games and summer come and go away.  
Her scrutiny

*Josephine Jacobsen*

Stays to encounter the uplifted gaze  
Of kneeling men,  
Of children such a doll can still amaze,  
Of women come to bargain or to praise.  
In blizzards, when

A moose, encouraged by the private snow  
Treads somberly  
Across her vision, she will meet his slow  
And doubtful look, before he turns to go,  
Not wholly free.

POET, WHEN YOU RHYME

Poet, when you rhyme lightly  
Do you perceive or not  
The poison that steeps brightly  
Your quick and fertile plot  
And brings the inward rot?

Cut back, cut back the early  
The feebly-blooded shoot,  
The knife is sharp and surly  
But cousin to the fruit.  
Cut backward to the root.

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Then from the vestige broken  
And hacked and without leaf  
Or living's tiniest token,  
Upon some night of grief  
Will bloom the strong relief,

And toward this consummation,  
By thrift and silence fed,  
A man in desolation,  
With you five centuries dead,  
Will turn, and raise his head.

*Josephine Jacobsen*

FROM SWEDEN

This troubled heart be still.  
The forest is at rest  
And no bird calls.

Far is summer from these snows.  
The earth of any need  
Is distant now.

Still be thy striving. It is night.  
Across the snow a man goes home —  
Whose window burns its simple light.

*Ralph Gustafson*

## FACTORY NIGHT

Smooth as oil the factory night  
pours into grooves of the company town  
and down the shafts of the iron mill  
whose engines, cushioned in beds of grease,  
purr like iron beasts in sleep.

The mill's insistent noises sound in dreams,  
re-echo like noon whistles from the hills,  
and once again the grinding of the gears,  
the huge knives slicing plates of steel,  
the pound of crushers and revolving wheels.  
Then sound dies in the shrill throats of steampipes,  
from the mouths of chimneys smoke puffs and stops,  
and the mill's shadow lies like night upon the town,  
prowls in dreams, a night invader ;  
and in the tired limbs of laborers  
machine-bred fevers rise in stealth  
like a disease that ravages their lives,  
plunders their homes and leaves behind  
a town of clapboard skeletons and carbon dust.

*S. Funaroff*

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TO AN ARCHITECT

*In the Theatre*

Early for the play  
The lights are dim.  
Lonely  
In the theatre he built,  
Lonely, I think of him.

These walls enfold  
His living thought,  
Here dwells the beauty  
That his hand has wrought —  
In every line his heart, his brain.  
Here I am near him  
And he lives again.

*In the Church*

Early for the prayer,  
The altar dim,  
Lonely  
In the church he planned,  
Lonely, I think of him.

These arches grew  
In print and chart;

*Frances Shaw*

His dream has taken form  
With subtle art.  
The stone aspiring is of his brain —  
Here I am near him  
And he lives again.

*In the Garden*

In his own garden  
Fragrant and dim  
Lonely  
On the evening paths,  
Lonely, I think of him.

Each tree-framed vista  
And each flowered line  
Gracious and colorful  
Of his design  
With happy labor did he bring to be —  
This beauty for the future  
That he might not see.

In his own garden  
Fragrant and dim  
Aware  
Within the place he loved,  
Aware I wait for him.

*Frances Shaw*

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### REVIEWS

#### THE SOLITARY IRONIST

*The Collected Poems of Sara Teasdale.* Macmillan.

ABOUT the time that Masfield was trying to bring the Chaucerian plainness of speech back to English verse, and a bright-haired young man from Idaho was transposing Provençal music in a fashion startling to English ears, Sara Teasdale published the poems with which this book commences. They touched on recognized themes in the recognized way, they had nothing rough or foreign about them, and they possessed, beyond their pleasant familiarity, a fluent melodiousness.

The keynote is struck in the opening sonnet to Eleanora Duse: "Oh beauty that is filled so full of tears." Beauty and sorrow; love, happy or crossed; death, shrunk from as the end of love and beauty, or desired as the peace they cannot give — these are the recurrent motifs. A girlish wistfulness is the distinguishing feature of the early lyrics. They have the charm of Heine's *Lieder*, without his sharpness, the poignancy of Housman's songs, without his bitterness. They are personal, without having the vice of privacy or the virtue of subtlety, honest but not profound. The properties are bread and wine, swords and viols; the settings are gardens, shrines and palaces; the characters: pilgrims, shepherds, knights, and kings and queens. Even where the poems bear titles that evoke common scenes — Union Square, Coney

*The Solitary Ironist*

Island, Gramercy Park, the Metropolitan Museum — these are merely the background for a moment of sentimental drama or traditional romance. But always there is the subdued melody that redeems the easy imagery and the trite situation. Some have the Elizabethan grace of the lyric that ends

When thou art more cruel than he,  
Then will Love be kind to thee.

Others strike the note that Edna Millay was to sound more vibrantly for a more deeply disillusioned generation:

I hoped that he would love me,  
And he has kissed my mouth,  
But I am like a stricken bird  
That cannot reach the south.

For though I know he loves me,  
Tonight my heart is sad;  
His kiss was not so wonderful  
As all the dreams I had.

Repeatedly there is the slight ironic touch at the close, which, though the irony is gentle and all too feminine, is an index to a discriminating sensibility.

The chief faults of Miss Teasdale's work are the monotony of her matter and the explicitness of her statements. Often vague where she should have been precise, as in the delineation of background, she was apt to be overly exact where she should have been reticent, as in defining the nature of the grief that troubled or the joy that exalted her. It is almost incredible that the poet who was to write the lyrics in *Flame and Shadow*, and more particularly those in *Dark of the Moon*, the woman who was to become "self-complete



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as a flower or a stone," should have been capable of the banality of lines like "I love, I am loved, he is mine" or "And when I am with you, I am at rest."

The fascination of this volume lies in the fact that it exhibits so clearly the poet's development. As the years went by, the themes did not alter much, but the cadences became more varied, the mood more reflective, the expression more sensitive. Gradually, the irony that pointed the best of the early lyrics deepened and strengthened the poetry of Miss Teasdale's maturity. She was moved by the same things, rejoiced by the same natural beauties, overcome by the same loneliness, haunted by the same recurrent terror. But the personal relation is realized with a keener sense of the nuances of human intercourse, the terror is measured by a fuller awareness of man's fate, even the landscapes are viewed with a more perceptive eye. With these sharpened responses to the world about and the world within, came also a better control of her instrument. The later poems do not require, as so many of the early ones seem to do, the accompaniment of voice and strings in order to give them a suggestiveness that they fail to achieve. The riper pieces are, as their author came to be, self-sufficient. It is no strange and bitter brew that Miss Teasdale offers—it is the wine that one expects with dinner in a civilized place. But with the years, one finds that the bouquet is finer and the flavor delightfully dry.

Aware, as every sensitive person must be, of the cruelties that beset mankind, Miss Teasdale scarcely ever touched

## *The Solitary Ironist*

upon the problems that are the subject of current poetry. This is brought home to the reader with sardonic force by the line, written, it is true, before the advent of fascism: "Oh when God made Italy He was gay and young." Her nearest approach to the Social Muse was in an early sentimental piece lamenting the lot of

the girls who ask for love  
In the lights of Union Square,

and in a later sonnet where she speaks of standing at night before the window confronting the brilliant city, and being visited by a "stark

Sense of the lives behind each yellow light,  
And not one wholly joyous, proud or free."

Even the poems written during the war show a signal ignorance of, if not quite aloofness from, the misery that eats the lives of the mass of humanity. Herself "not wholly joyous, proud or free," the circumstances of Sara Teasdale's life were yet sufficiently happy to enable her to savor the pleasures of travel and music, books and people, without too painful a realization of the disease infecting the society of which she was a part. It belongs, however, to a cultivated intelligence to appreciate the evils of existence as well as the gifts of fortune. But the later work, though it continues to be personal, harps upon a complaint so common to mankind as to raise the poetry to the level of the impersonal. There are still love poems that dwell upon the solace that perfect comradeship alone can give. The bulk of the later work, however, expresses an autumnal wisdom, or a craving

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for release from the burden of loneliness, the grief of lessening powers, the inevitable pain of living.

The poet of passion is the tender individualist, but when love's fulfillment is past, she can, if she is wise, find the sure refuge of the solitary in her own integrity. The recognition of her self-dependence finds contented expression in the lyric which opens her last and finest volume, where she confesses:

It was not you, though you were near,  
Though you were good to hear and see,  
It was not earth, it was not heaven,  
It was myself that sang in me.

It is expressed with a sombre resonance in not a few other poems of the same collection, most forthrightly perhaps in *Day's Ending*:

Aloof as aged kings,  
Wearing like them the purple,  
The mountains ring the mesa  
Crowned with a dusky light;  
Many a time I watched  
That coming-on of darkness  
Till stars burned through the heavens  
Intolerably bright.

It was not long I lived there  
But I became a woman  
Under those vehement stars,  
For it was there I heard  
For the first time my spirit  
Forging an iron rule for me,  
As though with slow cold hammers  
Beating out word by word:

"Only yourself can heal you,  
Only yourself can lead you,  
The road is heavy going  
And ends where no man knows;

### *The Solitary Ironist*

Take love when love is given,  
But never think to find it  
A sure escape from sorrow  
Or a complete repose."

The sole complete repose is death. The one escape would seem to be in the occupations named in *Leisure*:

The year will turn for me, I shall delight in  
All animals, and some of my own kind,  
Sharing with no one but myself the frosty  
And half ironic musings of my mind.

Here, plainly, is no revolutionary, in any sense of the word. The technique is traditional. The prevailing temper is one of acceptance — joyous, mournful, or resigned. But though Sara Teasdale's scope was limited, it enlarged with the years, so that her mature work delights one with its deeper music and frosty beauty. Even the longed-for achievement of the good society will not appreciably lessen private griefs. While these remain, one can find some assuagement in the melody of such lyrics as these, and take courage from their quiet irony.

*Babette Deutsch*

#### THOUGHTS REVOLVED

*The Man with the Blue Guitar and Other Poems*, by Wallace Stevens. Alfred A. Knopf.

One surprises, and is a little surprised by, the eminence of these poems. Not their excellence, for that is customary in Stevens, but a passionate sharpness of authority which I do not remember having felt before. It is not merely that plain speech has been dovetailed more often into the life-

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giving rhetoric, for that in itself might be only a further sophistication; it is the public significance and earnestness of the result.

The metrical and divisional scheme of *The Man with the Blue Guitar* was a particularly happy one, permitting Stevens every skilful kind of care and carelessness in the rumination his subject required of him. Stevens is always a "masked amazer" whose clear character does not appear at once. After the reader has admired certain lines because Shakespeare might have written them, he begins to admire them because only Stevens could. In this long poem, however, Stevens has given himself room to be explicit and there is less elegance for its own sake.

Almost all of Wallace Stevens' poems might go under the title here given to a set of four: *A Thought Revolved*. In our time any poetry which actually succeeds in being a thought revolved, i.e., displayed by the fantastic mind in its true facets and circling to a point of rest, seems extraordinary because there is so little like it. Most poems start with the need to objectify some fragment of reality, or to embody an experience, or to declaim, or to work a fable out of the imagination. In any case they seldom owe their form to intellectual coherence. Confused dissatisfaction with this has produced such exertions in sterility as the verse of Yvor Winters and associated poets, where "thought" means a few highly wrought commonplaces in inanimate form, the life and play of the mind reduced to drill. The grim classicism of that drill, like the classicism of the Fascists, may be an

index to our historical disorder. In any case, it is not strange that we should be refreshed by the performance of a man who has kept his civilized senses and continued to practice six hours a day.

On the blue guitar. This is a symbol characteristic of Stevens, suggesting improvisation, which is the essence of creation; a literally light tone and the profound overtones of folk music; Bohemianism, and the abstraction of abstract painting. It rhymes with "things as they are." That is convenient, perfect, and the poem thus begins, insistently rhyming these opposites as an introduction to the conflict which the poet wishes to **define**.

The man replied, "Things as they are  
Are changed upon the blue guitar."

And they said then, "But play, you must,  
A tune beyond us, yet ourselves . . ."

For the rhetorical variation within the following 32 sections, each made up of four, five, six or seven couplets, there are few if any parallels in this medium. The first six sections have an alternating easy ring of dialogue which is somehow majestic, like a chorus and principal in Sophocles on an issue of behavior or justice. To the poet, who says:

So that's life, then: things as they are?  
It picks its way on the blue guitar.

A million people on one string?  
And all their manner in the thing,

And all their manner, right or wrong? . . .

His audience replies:

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Do not speak to us of the greatness of poetry,  
Of the torches wispings in the underground,  
Of the structure of vaults upon a point of light,  
There are no shadows in our sun . . .

Poetry then proceeds to illustrate and at the same time to describe itself:

. . . the color, the overcast blue  
Of the air, in which the blue guitar  
Is a form, described but difficult,  
And I am merely a shadow hunched  
Above the arrowy, still strings,  
The maker of a thing yet to be made . . .

And in section XXII we get a statement in resolution of the conflict between poetry and "things as they are." I shall not quote this statement because there is a danger that people will scalpel it out of its context and hold it up all bloody as if it were the heart of the poem, which it is not, or as if it were Stevens' true resolution, which it is not either. The whole poem is that if anything is.

Writing in the *New Republic*, William Carlos Williams has criticized the second group of poems in this book, *Owl's Clover*, for "overemphasizing" the poet's argument. This means precisely nothing, and it soon appears that what Williams really objects to is the line of five beats, which "have a strange effect on a modern poet; they make him think he wants to think." Well, then they have been having that strange effect on Stevens for a long time, since most of his ambitious work has been in pentameter. It is true that *Owl's Clover* has a more studied air than *The Man with*

*Thoughts Revolved*

*the Blue Guitar*, more, for instance, of that kind of side-slipping and shading in which Stevens resembles Edwin Arlington Robinson:

She was that tortured one,  
So destitute that nothing but herself  
Remained and nothing of herself except  
A fear too naked for her shadow's shape . . .

But instead of being turgid and dull, as Williams says they are, these poems again exemplify, with subject matter of considerable grandeur, the luxuriant thoroughness of Stevens' mind. The subject is the decline of the west. To read Stevens on that subject should be a pleasure, and it is.

*Robert Fitzgerald*

TOMORROW'S PHOENIX

*Tomorrow's Phoenix*, by Ruth Lechlitner. Alcestis Press.

This book of poems, often distinguished, and at its best eloquent, offers a challenge to critics as well as to other revolutionary poets. In the recent outpouring of Left-Wing literature, standards of criticism have been relaxed because the subject-matter has been found more important than the method. On the one side, there has been fault-finding because poets working with new material have used old forms without bending them to their purpose (the problem of style: shall one use the method of Crane or Eliot to a new end?), and on the other side, political sympathies have led to over-indulgence, and the writer has gone on his way, in some cases one of mere wrenched violence, because political creeds



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jibe. Just criticism has been set aside in order to damn or praise.

There has been a hue and cry that new subject-matter demands new forms. In some instances this has proved true. What might be a better statement is that any poet creates his own form; he can use the old and leave his own mark upon it so strongly that it appears to be something out of the blue. In *Tomorrow's Phoenix* the beginning of this process is evident. Well schooled in traditional techniques, and aware of the values established by the recent revival of the metaphysical poets, Miss Lechlitner nearly always makes her finest effects when she uses a rather strict and formal pattern. This is not invariably a test, for *The Builders*, in experimental form, is one of the most moving poems in the book.

Another instructive corollary is the comparative lack of dogma which marks Miss Lechlitner's volume. Where the abstraction comes clean, the quality is diminished. Although the author realizes that the theorists are "Waiting with salt in hand for tomorrow's Phoenix," and that such procedure is bound to fail, she lets Dupont carry the weight of all that is to be hated, and falls into the trap which makes so many of the cartoons in the *New Masses* ineffective. And in the poem called *On the Wall to Your Left*, the almost terrifying picture presented is turned flat by the glibness of the last lines:

Sorry to hear  
You find the technique crude, possibly worth

*Tomorrow's Phoenix*

Less than the wall space. But the meaning's clear:  
The artist is unknown; the title, "Birth."

There are the other poems, however, poems of remarkable integrity and power which make up the greater part of the volume. It is in such lines as these, from *Noon: Southwest*, that one finds this quality:

Through the hag-brown limbs of the cottonwood  
The tawny fires of summer run.  
Thickly the lizard-lidded sun

Blinks in the white lust of his hour.  
A brown boy sleeps. Two buzzards fly  
Slow-winged and gaunt. Cicadas cry.

Or again, in *From the Cold Fact*:

Calling each other friend, we dare to breed  
In the blind dark, for blind eyes cannot see  
The answer that the changing years shall trace  
In blood once more upon the stricken face.

These are merely samples. *From What Superb Mechanics*, "*This Is the Way, This Only*," *Cycle*, *Winter Afternoon*, and *Now to the Sky* go to make up what is, in my judgment, the most distinguished contribution to American revolutionary poetry to date. In these poems is found the welding of the natural and human worlds; Miss Lechlitner has made order from disorder so that the expanded image becomes an event.

In the light of this achievement, critics and poets may do well to conduct a stock-taking of the accomplishments of the younger poets. *Tomorrow's Phoenix* stands almost alone in the field. Vigorous, firm, this poetry is rooted.

*Samuel French Morse*

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### EURIPIDES AS LYRIST

*Ion of Euripides*, translated with notes by H. D. Houghton  
Mifflin Co.

The *Ion* exhibits a theme characteristic of Euripides and similar in plot to the *Iphigeneia among the Taurians*, the *Elektra*, and the lost *Telephos*; it is the general kind of plot in which the hero is found at the outset estranged or degraded from his proper circumstances, but normally at the end, after a rapid series of events and a critical recognition scene, is restored to his lost fortunes. This is the story of Ion, the hero who was thought to have given his name to the Ionians; a bastard borne by Kreousa, princess of Athens, to Apollo; left as a baby to die, rescued by the gods and made caretaker of the temple at Delphi; acknowledged by Xouthos, husband of Kreousa, as *his* illegitimate son; almost murdered by the jealous Kreousa; revealed by tokens that were with him when he was exposed as a baby, and proclaimed as the future founder of the Ionian nation. Much of this material is the stuff out of which new comedy, from Menander to Shakespeare, has been made; with its complex plot and happy ending, it reads at times more like melodrama than tragedy. This effect, however, is partly offset by the effect of some lovely lyrics, the setting at sacred Delphi, and the unseen presence of the god, whose ways nevertheless are only with great difficulty justified to man.

It is not easy to translate Euripides. He was a lyric poet of high achievement, and to the rendering of his lyric passages

*Euripides as Lyrist*

H. D. has brought her own gift for delicate, precise imagery. Nobody can complain about that; however, H. D. (and others have done this) seems to treat Euripides as if he were only, or always, a lyrist. He was far more. No rendering of a Greek tragedy can be adequately faithful to the original unless it takes into account the difference between recited episodes and ode, the great range of speed and tension controlled by all three of the major tragedians. The contrast between exalted lyric on the one hand, and narrative, elucidation, and debate on the other, is marked perhaps more clearly in Euripides than in either Sophocles or Aeschylus. The *Ion* is not all pitched in the same key; but this translation is.

And as the meters of the Greek playwright vary, so does his mood. Such changes disappear from this translation, partly by a process of condensation, partly through cuts. Thus lines 592-647 are condensed into a few lines with most of the content, naturally, omitted. Here *Ion* is arguing with Xouthos. He points out that he is illegitimate, that the Athenians will snub him, that his stepmother must hate him, that he will be better off as a temple-servant at Delphi than as a ruler at Athens; all this at considerable length. He adds some reflections on the sorrows of kings. One antistrophe (1090-1105) is dropped. In it, the chorus of women attendants protests against the poets who speak of the lewdness of women. Men are far worse. The ode ends with a carefully brutal reference to Xouthos and his bastard; lyric, but harsh. The other important cut is 1573-1605, where

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Athene predicts the glorious future of the Ionian race, to be descended from Ion.

Perhaps these passages are not high poetry, do not improve the play, but their omission strikes me as significant. They show Euripides as a debater, a propagandist, and a moralist; one who was aware of sex hatreds and class hatreds; one who did not mince or veil his words. Who invented that ideal of Euripides which refuses, *a priori*, to admit such qualities? Such an ideal seems to be at work here.

To illustrate further, we may take the first recognition scene (page 53). Xouthos has been told that the first man he meets coming out of the temple will prove to be his lost son. When he encounters Ion, he claims him and tries to embrace him. Ion, not knowing what is going on, repulses him as rudely as he knows how. The Greek is written in trochaic tetrameter (the metre of *Locksley Hall*) clear, brisk, unequivocal; the translation is confused and feverish.

*Xouthos*—My own — my beloved —  
*Ion*—own? beloved?  
*Xouthos*—your hand — your face —  
*Ion*—madness —  
*Xouthos*—O, I would only touch —  
*Ion*—not this — the priest's head-dress —  
*Xouthos*—I find you  
*Ion*—and this arrow —  
*Xouthos*—and you, me —  
*Ion*—my quiver — my bow —

But actually, Ion and Xouthos were talking in sentences; and what Ion said was, literally: "Stand back, before you get an arrow through your lungs."

*Euripides as Lyrist*

Again, when Ion first appears (page 10) it is sunrise. Ecstasy, we are told.

O, my Lord,  
O, my king of the chariot,  
O, four-steeds,  
O, bright wheel,  
O, fair crest  
of Parnassus you just touch.

Euripides was not in an ecstasy all the time, or even most of it. Perhaps here we do have it; nevertheless, the original passage is written in anapaests which describe what is happening and do not apostrophize anyone. (Also, why confound Phoebus and Helios?)

The notes are "merely the translator's personal interpretation." They show the same over-refining tendency as the translation; otherwise they are good reading. But H. D. had better leave philology alone. *Ion* (page x) could not possibly mean either *one* or *violet*; there is a difference in Greek between a long and a short o, and the endings don't fit. The name is explained (after a fashion) in the original, lines 661-663.

I have taken up a good deal of space with what may, I am afraid, appear to be harsh and captious criticism. It is not easy to translate Euripides; but there can be no question about H. D.'s ability to write English verse, and she has based on the original a dramatic poem with much beauty in it. When the translator gives us (page 130) lines like these

the gods' pace moves slow,  
do they forget?  
no;

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blessed be the man  
who waits  
(nor doubts)  
for the end  
of the intricate  
plan

which are felicitous, if free, and excellent in their own right, it seems ungrateful to complain. What I do complain against is the tendency which would exhibit things Greek in a light that never was on sea or land, and a Greek tragedy as a sustained lyric. Such, for Euripides at least, it was not; and the result is a pseudomorph. H. D. refers (page 23) to the story that the poet was, in his youth, a painter. The same *vita* tells us also that he began life as a prizefighter. Both stories are very likely false; but if we remember one, and think of it as symbolic or significant, we should perhaps not forget the other.

*Richmond Lattimore*

### A FEW GHOSTS

*The Last Look and Other Poems*, by Mark Van Doren.  
Henry Holt & Co.

Mr. Van Doren's latest book represents no new development of his talent. On the other hand, all the virtues familiar to his readers are present here: the suavity, the whimsicality, the gift for occasional telling phrases, the neat jointure of rhyme. Mr. Van Doren is an elegant poet, one who does not presume to shake the world, who finds it sad but not terrible. He has no furies; rather a few fireside ghosts.

## *A Few Ghosts*

Poetry written in English has for some years been undergoing a change. It has tended to become tighter in its structure, more forceful in its language and psychologically more searching. Poets have become increasingly distrustful of the vague effusions of sensibility which are still vulgarly termed "poetic." The trend has been toward a greater precision both of thought and feeling (the two, of course, are concomitant).

Now Mr. Van Doren is aware of these changes and has defended and expounded them frequently. But as they express an essential change in the attitude of the poet toward his material, he seems to have remained outside them. There is a softness and looseness of mind apparent in his work. This is illustrated both in the way he apprehends a subject and in the blurred quality of his descriptive language. His imagery is vague; no pictures remain. Compare, for example, the following lines from a poem in the present volume,

Upon a summer Sunday: wide the song  
Of strengthless wings that bore the sky along;

Upon a summer Sunday: strange the power,  
Inaudible that opened every flower;

On Sunday, in the summer, through the white  
Mid-world they wandered, meditating flight.

with these lines from Marianne Moore's poem "New York":

The center of the wholesale fur trade,  
starred with tepees of ermine and peopled with foxes,  
the long guard hairs waving two inches beyond the body of the pelt;  
the ground dotted with deer-skins — white with white spots  
"as satin needle-work in a single colour may carry a varied pattern."



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The difference between the hazy impression in one case and the extraordinarily sharp focus in the other is more than a mere difference in subject matter or poetic "style." It is a difference in mind inherent in the creative processes of the two poets. Thus it is not surprising to find that the imprecision with which Mr. Van Doren interprets the sensuous world is paralleled by the vagueness of the mental states he describes. His character sketches, so reminiscent of Robinson, are, unlike the latter's, almost always seen in a sentimental perspective.

In Mr. Van Doren's love poetry the result of this unresolved mixture of thought and feeling is to weigh almost every line with an intimation of things which lie beyond the power of saying. This is annoying when it appears to result not from an inherent complexity in the situation but from a sentimental ambiguity in the author's mind. This is not to say that the experiences which produce poetry can be analyzed like chemical compounds. But it is to say that poetry becomes cheap when the poet too easily assumes his reaction to be rare and mysterious.

This is the bare beginning; she was endless.  
There is no number named that would enclose  
Each of her dear particulars; abstraction  
Dies in the deed, as language in the rose.

Or,

Intelligent her waist was,  
As though both heart and brain  
Lived there along with silence,  
And with them love had lain.

*A Few Ghosts*

When one compares these lines with the passionate, direct, physical awareness of the beloved person in Donne or Marvell, one sees how thoroughly Mr. Van Doren belongs to the sentimental tradition. By comparison, the love poetry of Donne seems almost brutal!

*William Gilmore*

THE POETRY OF LORCA

*Lament for the Death of a Bullfighter and Other Poems*, by Federico Garcia Lorca. In the original Spanish with English translation by A. L. Lloyd. Oxford Univ. Press.

The first report of the death of Garcia Lorca would have it that the Fascists seized and destroyed him because he wrote poems, quite as they seize and destroy historic monuments. This was a myth. The man was murdered because he was political. But the myth in its cultural signification is true — although there is no *reasonable* reason why his poems could not have been made by some equally gifted Fascist, as there is no reasonable reason why a *Paradise Lost* could not have been written by some Jesuit, learned as Milton. They just could not. Even as the death of De Bosis in Italy showed that Fascism cannot long command the allegiance of creators, so the death of Garcia Lorca in Spain shows that creation impels the service of socialism.

Garcia Lorca's poems use the art of words to exalt the arts of deeds. "Manly" prosody, made suspect in the English tongue by the practices of such philistines as Kipling, is now

## POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

retrieved by this aesthetic performance in Lloyd's English translation, which is supplied with Spanish text and an informative preface. Writers in English can learn from the work of this Spanish gypsy who learned from our Whitman and wrote an ode to him. Our poetry at its full would reconcile passion recollected in tranquillity (the style of Wordsworth) with action induced through agitation (the style of Whitman).

The external of Garcia Lorca's art is his handling of free assonantal verse. This Lloyd has handled with formal skill, although, as he admits, with not enough skill to approximate, as Sherry Mangan managed in a recent issue of *Smoke*, the sonorousness and cadence of the original tongue. Lloyd's assonance, though not backed up throughout his lines, is often brilliant at the terminal words:

Preciosa, full of fear,  
runs into the house in which,  
far above the pines,  
lives the Consul of the English.

The Englishman gives to the gypsy  
a pitcher of warm milk,  
and a glass of gin also,  
which Preciosa does not drink.

And while to those around her  
weeping she tells her tale,  
the furious wind is gnawing  
upon the roofs of slate.

It is not surprising that Garcia Lorca's verses rang through the breadth of his land from the lips of illiterate persons long before his aesthetic populism led him to its political

## *The Poetry of Lorca*

expression. The internals of his art, its surrealist extensions of symbolist association are of an inherently popular nature:

For the stone traps seedlings and clouds,  
skeletons of larks and wolves of darkness;  
but gives neither sound, nor crystal, nor fire,  
only bullrings, and bullrings and more bullrings, unwalled.

Above all, this work is important as propaganda. It does not come straight out; everything is held in suspense, implicit. Although one of the finest of the strophes in his *Lament* is explicit enough in all conscience, it is an exception to his general style as here translated. It defines the furthest explicit limit of his implicit style:

The cow of the old world  
passed her sad tongue  
over a muzzle of bloodspots  
spilt upon the sand,  
and the bulls of Guisando,  
half dead, half turned to stone,  
bellowed like two centuries  
weary of treading the earth.  
No.  
I do not want to see it!

As is essential also to poetic propaganda which does come straight out, this propaganda is moved by magic — seemingly unpredictable; compact of mystery, vitally fatal. As with all men of genius, Lorca's life, his work, his death were one — consummated in the classic destiny that his last poem should have been a bullfighter's elegy. He who like Hemingway put the power of his contemplation at the service of the praise of action chose like Hemingway in action the side which the service of the working class gathers to itself. The

## POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

actuality of his anti-Fascism makes his poetic philosophy unutterably touching in its indication of the mystic meaning of the bullfighter's conquest of the beast and the scientific meaning of the art of revolution's conquest of the mill.

*John Wheelwright*

### NEWS NOTES

*The New Masses*, beginning with the first issue in December, will publish a monthly literary supplement, edited by Michael Gold, Horace Gregory, Granville Hicks, and Joshua Kunitz. An announcement in the November 2nd issue reads: "The supplement will contain original creative work in prose and poetry, critical essays, literary letters from abroad, studies of literary personalities, and discussions of importance to the development of Marxist culture. It will seek to provide an outlet for the best of that revolutionary writing against which the pages of bourgeois magazines are more and more being closed."

On the afternoon of October 18th a reception was given by the Academy of American Poets, at the Ambassador Hotel in New York, in honor of the Abbey Theatre Irish Players and their manager, Frederick R. Higgins. Mr. Higgins, who was associated with Frank O'Connor and W. B. Yeats in founding the players group, took occasion to make some remarks about American poetry. "It strikes me," he said, "as being a fairly pretty kind of thing. Indeed, if I may say so, it is superficial. Its roots are not in American soil to any great depth. It is emotional rather than passionate. It is poetry of observation." Mr. Higgins then sang one of his own poems.

Henry Holt and Company have just issued a handsome volume entitled *Recognition of Robert Frost*, to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the publication of *A Boy's Will*. Edited by Richard Thornton, and composed of book reviews, critical essays, biographical and bibliographical articles, it is a selection from the great body of material that has been written on Frost during the past quarter-century. The fifty or more authors include William Dean Howells, Norman Douglas, Amy Lowell, Ezra Pound, Edward Thomas, James Stephens, Louis Untermeyer, Padraic Colum,

Elizabeth Shepley Sergeant, Percy H. Boynton, Llewellyn Jones, W. H. Auden, and C. Day Lewis. Not least of the many enjoyable features of the book are its interesting photographs. To meet a similar demand, the Macmillan Company has issued a new twenty-four page booklet on Sara Teasdale. This contains a biographical sketch, a critical appreciation by Jessie B. Rittenhouse, comments from English and American critics on each of the poet's volumes, and as a frontispiece the appealing Nickolas Muray photograph. It will be sent free by the publishers on request.

A memorial service in honor of Anna Hempstead Branch, who died last summer, was held on October 31 at St. Mark's-in-the-Bouwerie. Among the poets who took part were Padraic Colum, Edwin Markham, Leonora Speyer, William Rose Benét, Margaret Widdemer, and Isabel Fiske Conant. Dr. Norman Guthrie presided, and some of Miss Branch's poems were read by Mrs. Richard Mansfield, widow of the famous Shakespearean actor.

*The Partisan Review* has reappeared with a smart cover design, a good list of contributors, and a new policy of non-commitment to any political group. Offices are at 22 East 17th Street, New York City. The December issue contains a study of Flaubert's politics by Edmund Wilson, poems by Wallace Stevens and James Agee, stories by Delmore Schwartz and James T. Farrell, four etchings and a prose poem by Pablo Picasso, and what is perhaps the best review to date of Hemingway's new novel, by Philip Rahv. Formerly associated with the Communist party, this magazine now pledges itself to fighting "the party-line in literature." Though some of the contributors are adherents of Trotsky, there is no evidence that the review is an organ of Trotskyism as its opponents charge; nor is there anything to indicate a sectarian bias in the plainly mugwump attitude of the opening editorial. The question arises, however, whether a magazine professing revolutionary character can avoid having some definite political program, either explicit or implied. Taken at its face value, the policy of *The Partisan Review* seems to boil down to this: that literature, for the present, should not lead to action but to more literature. That may or may not be an excellent policy. But is it revolutionary?

The Imogen Clark Award of one hundred dollars, given annually by the Poetry Society of America for the best lyric of thirty lines or under, was won this year by Josephine Jacobsen of Baltimore — not by Josephine Johnson of Norfolk, as erroneously stated

## POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

in our October issue. We regret this juggling of the names of two well-known southern poets.

We are glad to announce the appointment of Miss Amy Bonner as Eastern Business Representative of POETRY, to be in charge of advertising and distribution for New York and the eastern states. Miss Bonner, who has had wide experience in the journalistic and promotional fields, was employed at one time in our editorial department under Harriet Monroe. She is also known as a contributor of feature articles to many periodicals. Inquiries relating to the business side of the magazine may, if desired, be addressed to Miss Bonner at 12 West 68th Street, New York City.

### *Notes on Contributors*

REUEL DENNEY, one of the important younger poets, was born in Manhattan in 1913, educated at Dartmouth, and has contributed poems to various magazines, including POETRY. He now lives in Buffalo.

FRANCES SHAW, whose death in October we recorded in our last issue, was the wife of the late Howard Van Doren Shaw, the distinguished Chicago architect. The sequence of poems which we print this month was found among the poet's belongings and graciously sent to the magazine by her daughter, Mrs. John T. McCutcheon. We take deep pride in presenting these last poems by one of our oldest and best loved contributors.

WILLIAM PILLIN was born in Russia and immigrated to America thirteen years ago at the age of twelve. He has contributed to *The New Republic*, *The New Masses*, *Dynamo*, etc., and was this year's recipient of the Jeannette Sewell Davis Prize, awarded by POETRY.

WILLIAM STEPHENS, who is also known to our readers, is now living in Chicago and working on *Esquire-Coronet*.

JOSEPHINE JACOBSEN was born in Canada in 1908 but has spent the greater part of her life in Baltimore, where she still lives. She is the author of *The Marble Satyr and Other Poems* (1928).

AMANDA BENJAMIN HALL, of New London, Conn., has often appeared in these pages. Her latest book of poems, *Cinnamon Saint*, was recently published by Bruce Humphries.

MABEL SIMPSON, another well-known contributor, lives in Newark, New Jersey. She is the author of *Poems* (Harold Vinal).

MARY CHARLES is the pseudonym of an English poet, familiar to

## Notes on Contributors

our readers under another *nom de guerre*.

BELLE TURNBULL was born in Hamilton, New York, but since the age of seven has lived in Colorado Springs. She warns us not to object to the present group of sonnets "on the ground that hard rock miners couldn't talk that way. Some of them do." She also informs us that "Mr. Probus works in the Climax Molybdenum mines, and Stringtown is a part of Leadville."

S. FUNAROFF, of New York City, has contributed to *The New Masses*, *Scribner's*, *The New Republic*, etc. A book of his poems, *The Spider and the Clock*, is scheduled for January publication by International Publishers. He is 26, and has done advertising, publicity, and social service work, as well as free-lance journalism. He has appeared once before in POETRY, under a pseudonym.

The following poets make their appearance here for the first time:

NORMAN ROSTEN was born in Monticello, N. Y., January 1, 1914. He was educated at Brooklyn College and New York University, and has worked for the Federal Theatre as playreader. Having won a \$1,250 scholarship for a play of his own, he is now enjoying a year's study in the drama at the University of Michigan.

MARY J. J. WRINN, of New York City, is the author of the well-known book on the writing of poetry, *The Hollow Reed*.

RALPH GUSTAFSON, of Sherbrooke, Quebec, is the author of a book of poems, *The Golden Chalice*, and of a play in verse, *Alfred the Great*, just published in London and Toronto.

EMMA GRAY TRIGG is president of the Poetry Society of Virginia and the author of a book of poems, *After Eden*, just issued by Putnam's. She lives near Richmond, dividing her time between poetry and music.

BRYANT MOREY FRENCH is an undergraduate at Amherst.

All but one of this month's reviewers are familiar to our readers.

BABETTE DEUTSCH, of New York, is a well-known contributor to periodicals and the author of a number of books of verse and criticism, including *This Modern Poetry*.

JOHN WHEELWRIGHT lives in Boston and is editor of the notable Vanguard Verse series of poetry chapbooks, *Poems for a Dime*, and *Poems for 2 Bits*.<sup>1</sup> RICHMOND LATTIMORE teaches in the Greek department at Bryn Mawr College.

ROBERT FITZGERALD is on the staff of *Time*. SAMUEL FRENCH MORSE is a graduate student at Harvard. WILLIAM GILMORE a new contributor, was formerly book editor of the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* and is now engaged in business in New York.



## POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

### BOOKS RECEIVED

#### ORIGINAL VERSE:

- Such Counsels You Gave to Me*, by Robinson Jeffers. Random House.  
*A Trophy of Arms, Poems 1926-1935*, by Ruth Pitter. Macmillan Co.  
*Sign of Capricornus*, by Kathryn Worth. Alfred A. Knopf.  
*Reading the Spirit*, by Richard Eberhart. Oxford Univ. Press.  
*The Great Horse*, by Helene Magaret. Farr and Rinehart.  
*The Hills Grow Smaller*, by Zoe Akins. Harper & Bros.  
*Pale Maidens*, by Frederick Johnston. Verona Press, Verona, Italy.  
*Aisle-Seat*, by Isabel Fiske Conant. Mosher Press.  
*Armatheon and Daphne*, by Mary Ellis Robins. Dorrance & Co.  
*Rhythmical Tales of Stormy Years*, by Vladimir Karapetoff. Priv. ptd., N.Y.C.  
*By the Way*, by V. Morrogh. Favil Press, London, England.  
*For the Lonely*, by Sarah Litsey. Favil Press.  
*Cinnamon Saint*, by Amanda Benjamin Hall. Bruce Humphries.  
*Green Lions*, by Douglas Stewart. Whitcombe & Tombs, Ltd. New Zealand.  
*No Beauty in Battle*, by Barbara Young. Paebar Co., N.Y.C.  
*Through Remembered Windows*, by Pepita Crounse. Silhouettes Press, Ontario, Cal.  
*Protagoras, a Poem of Man*, by Demetrios A. Michalaros. Syndicate Press, Chicago.  
*Documents and Dainties*, by Albert Clements. Mimeograph Press, Hudson, N. Y.  
*Stars Are Caught*, by Richmond George Anthony. Bard Press, Jackson, Mo.  
*Cuentos De California*, by Beulah May and Filomina Shafer. Dennis Printers, Santa Ana, California.  
*And the Stone Is Cold*, by Luella Reynolds Mead. Saunders Studio Press, Claremont, Cal.

#### PROSE:

- Joaquin Miller, Literary Frontiersman*, by Martin Severin Peterson. Stanford Univ. Press.

#### ANTHOLOGIES AND A TRANSLATION:

- Columbia Poetry 1937*, with an Introduction by Oscar James Campbell. Columbia University Press.  
*Voices from the Fields*, Ed. by Russell Lord. Houghton Mifflin Co.  
*Chinese Lyrics*, trans. into English verse by Ch'u Ta-Kao. Cambridge Univ. Press.

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*For A Poet's Christmas*

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#### ITINERARY, 1937-1938

November 5	.....	New York City, New York
November 7	.....	Wilmington, Delaware
November 8	.....	Columbia, South Carolina
November 9	.....	Charleston, South Carolina
November 11	.....	Savannah, Georgia
November 13	.....	St. Augustine, Florida
November 16	.....	Miami, Florida
December 4	.....	Atlanta, Georgia
December 12	.....	Wichita Falls, Texas
January 16	.....	Dodge City, Kansas
January 22	.....	Sioux City, Iowa
January 28	.....	Indianapolis, Ind.

#### COMMENTS

*John Hall Wheelock*: "I think poetry has seldom been set to music by a composer who was at once so impassioned and discerning. It was an unforgettable experience!"

*Margaret Widdemer*: "I think poets should realize the remarkable things Mr. Russ is doing for poetry — in the splendid array of artists presenting their work, and in what I feel must be an arduous and tremendous task of building up such an appallingly varied and magnificent program as I have before me . . . this is a thing very close to me, yet it is a national thing!"

*A. M. Sullivan*: "Mr. Russ is sensitive to the poem's right in the song, believing that the poet's idea, story and mood should be communicated, not distorted by music."

Elmo Russ' concert of his songs with Alfred Chigi, barytone, for Friday, November 5, Steinway Hall, New York City — announced September 1 — was half subscribed by September 15th.

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# P O E T R Y

## A MAGAZINE OF VERSE

VOL. LI NO. IV

JANUARY 1938

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### FOUR POEMS

#### PHOENIX

P HOENIX, bird symbolical  
Rise invulnerable and weird,  
Chrysolite and changing steel  
Ecstatic, pyrognomic bird  
Taloned to create or kill  
At the integrated word.

Mythical bird the age denies  
Callous with a beak of iron  
Distort with scornful strident cries  
The tragic masks of tortured stone,  
Plunging from the scouring seas  
To the magnetic turning sun.



POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

Phoenix, bird of iron and fire  
Claw the roots of frigid rock,  
Strip the firmament and score  
Circles on the satanic lake  
Where hang the smiling masks which were  
Frozen by your electric look.

RHAPSODY

This sodden evening mortuary peace  
Enwraps the drenched suburban groves  
Brahms pumping slowly from the radiogram  
Swells over pavements swept with rain  
Boughs drag the heavy air with noisy birds  
The weekend cyclists race for home.

Look and listen imagine the worlds of death  
The dead inhabit or rotting underground  
Color the rain with their earthy stench  
Tainting the air climbing insides of trees  
Or leaden worlds the deaf strain ear to hear  
The black unpatterned night the blind endure.

Switch out the lights and forget tomorrow  
Jerked by the strings of money or love  
Society engages in its complex dance

*D. S. Savage*

We dance all dance across the tramlit street  
Across the golf course where the dripping trees  
With shadows shelter homeless lovers.

Live no longer in projected worlds  
The simplified cities of the communist  
Or worlds of memory among faded emblems  
(nostalgic scent of flowers in winter rooms)  
Watching the rain start again evening fall  
Upon this present softly covering all.

WINTER OFFERING

All I can offer now is a cracked china jug  
Of water, and, grown with tedious sweat and toil,  
Potatoes from the back-garden clods dug,  
Cut with the blunt spade-edge, clogged with heavy soil.

I wish I could give you apples, grapes and pears,  
I wish I could give you cider and sour wine  
But the orchard has been rank and green for years  
And its fruit won't ripen without sunshine.

Potatoes cement bone, keep body and soul together.  
Water costs nothing and will do for the present.  
It's difficult enough to be gay in this wretched weather  
Without useless regrets for living like a peasant.

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

We'll make no virtue of enforced economy,  
Strike no impressive plaster or tin attitudes.  
Poverty's fixed, archaic physiognomy  
Projects only through masks where nothing else extrudes.

SONG

Wretched cold and miserable  
The streets are mirrors glazed with pain  
Imaging my bitter moods  
There is nothing but the tall  
Trees in dejected attitudes  
Cowed by the continual rain.

Last week's rent is owing still  
The sky will never clear again  
My cap is soaked and my boots leak  
I haven't tuppence for a meal  
The trees have bent all the past week  
Under the continual rain.

Lachrymose the gutter spills  
Despondent water down the drain  
Despondency has come to stay  
With influenza coughs and chills  
Through an unending wintry day  
Cowed by the continual rain.

*D. S. Savage*

## FOR THE GLORY OF ITALY

*For the glory of Italy Il Duce Mussolini salutes an orphan and widow of the Ethiopian War. News Item.*

Your wife's arms outstretched in crucifixion only embrace  
grief,  
And your kiss is now the remembered touch of a falling leaf.  
Your son may still say "Father" even though it be a hollow  
sound,  
Your own mouth may not say "son" for it tastes bitter,  
foreign ground.  
The Italian sun warms turquoise pools and purpling olive  
branches.  
The African sun scorches and withers bleeding flesh and  
blanches  
The bones of the slain. O piteous, futile, unburied dead!  
At home Mussolini salutes the woman whom you wed  
With his solemn kiss of state, while you crumble in sand  
and rot,  
And he grasps the shoulders of the straight young son whom  
you begot.  
Il Duce alive in uniform rewards his human slaves.  
Was it the wind, or did laughter shriek from those dreary  
desert graves?

*Marie Luhrs*

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

TWO POEMS

EXHORTATION

Peace, peace, you dead and dying things  
That raise your wasted fingers through the frightened grass;  
Today is new and yesterday's forgotten.  
Let every nymph come quickly out of the stream  
And dry herself shyly with a handful of pine needles  
For the last time. Go, put on a suit,  
Shepherd, there is no time any more  
For her to throw her body into your waiting arms.  
Tonight take your car and park it close to some shrubbery  
And steal your love.

Lie still, you dead and dying fingers.  
This earth will protect you. Peace! Peace!  
You under the earth, too, you frontiersman.  
We are proud of you, but you cannot stand beside us.  
Under the earth with you, boy, riding bareback.  
Take your horse with you. God knows it's dark and cold  
down there.  
Are you all under? Now peace, you dead.  
Peace, peace, you dead and dying things  
That raise your wasted fingers through the frightened grass;  
Today is new and yesterday's forgotten.

*Ray Pierce*

FORMULA

Dance, dance hard, heart, against the beat of time mechanized;

Push backwards, hands, curl down your nails and strip away the congealing gel of deceptive sentiment;

Body, make yourself devotee of fundamentals;

Have you forgotten after these few million years the individual?

Bare your breast to the seeking tongue of change

And let it caress you, licking over your smooth skin.

Pull closer the unidentified body of truth — whether it is black or white, what matter?

Swing into the rhythm of the tom-tom thud of pulse, dancing.

Dance, dance hard, heart, to save yourself from the screw and the lever.

*Ray Pierce*

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

END AND BEGINNING

I

Born of my mother white and still whitening,  
white-housed in a white village, husbanded white,  
strange soon the bandage loosened onto fright  
and the captive kindled, noiseless and frightening;  
followed the flavor of heartfire, the tightening  
throat and hot and terrible the flood salt  
spilled, the sable mushroom vomited in the vault.  
Crystalled no more on the tongue's research, lightening  
no longer, the wings fled and the log in dust,  
the hollow is great grassed, the cloud goes over,  
the song goes over and the ripple is under;  
but this was the earth that followed on the rust  
of whiteness and where it followed there was clover  
running like doom in the rain and thunder.

II

Early we burned our autumn apple who dipped  
for death the early candles of our bloom  
and lit the stonehenge of an upper room.  
For fire wind in the orchard well equipped  
since first on April's tender skull there dripped  
the warm rain's heart we ripened as a leaf

*Russell Beckwith*

once we were limed of tooth and bone by grief  
and blue the heavy breast of sorrow stripped.  
And as a leaf we lay in death and weather  
and what we living had denied that thing  
came and looked on us. Quietly we lay there,  
finally dead, under the apple tree together  
while triumph fed its fill and wondering,  
the world came and looked at our growing hair.

III

Only the cows that never come to eat  
the tender pasture and the dog that barks  
never to our moon, only the young larks  
never nurtured in this forgotten wheat  
and the speckled snake going round in the heat  
and the boy that never from our hill looks  
for the sea and her ships, only the rooks  
that never disturb and the track were fleet  
humped the brier rabbit, only the whirring  
is here to measure how full we have died;  
and how long since beginning, only the wall,  
only the chimney in the wild stirring roses,  
only the seed pearls lost with the bride,  
only the moles in their old house know at all.

*Russell Beckwith*



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THREE POEMS

THE HANGAR

Above the marsh, a hollow monument,  
Ribbed with aluminum, enormous tent  
Sheeted with silver, set to face the gale  
Of the steady trade that swelled the clipper sail,  
The hangar stands. With doors now buckled close  
Against the summer wind, the empty house  
Reserves a space shaped to the foundered dream.  
The *Macon*, lost, moves with the ocean stream.

Level the marshes, far and low the hills.  
The useless structure, firm on the ample sills,  
Rises incredible to state again:  
*Thus massive was the vessel, built in vain.*  
For this one purpose the long sides were planned  
To lines like those of downward pouring sand,  
Time-sifting sand; but Time immobile, stayed,  
In substance bound, in these bright walls delayed.

This housed the shape that plunged through stormy air.  
Empty cocoon! Yet was the vision fair  
That like a firm bright cloud moved from the arch,  
Leaving this roof to try a heavenly march;  
Impermanent, impractical, designed

*Janet Lewis*

To frame a paradox and strongly bind  
The weight, the weightless, in a living shape  
To cruise the sky and round the cloudy Cape.

Less substance than a mathematic dream  
Locked in the hollow keel and webbed beam!  
Of the ingenious mind, the expensive pride,  
The highest hope, the last invention tried!  
And now the silver tent alone remains.  
Slowly the memory of disaster wanes.  
Still in the summer sun the bastions burn  
Until the inordinate dream again return.

ON AN OLD WOMAN DYING

Something was marred in making at her birth.  
Nor mind nor body ably grew, nor well.  
In a short time the flesh was old and ill.  
The child's intelligence, a childish mirth,  
Halted its growth to live in that sad frame,  
Life difficult and strange, and none to blame.

Unjust detention! Loneliness and pain  
And ridicule pursued her all her days.  
Yet in her speech and fierce bewildered gaze  
The shyest child might read affection plain.  
Daily she begged us to accept her love,  
In charity to accept her and approve.

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Now she is dying, and, half blind with age,  
The eyes peer dimly; now love may discern  
Momently in their shades the gay return  
Of courage, dissolution to assuage.  
Let it be this in naming her we name.  
This at her death may lasting radiance claim.

AT CARMEL HIGHLANDS

Below the gardens and the darkening pines  
The living water sinks among the stones,  
Sinking yet foaming till the snowy tones  
Merge with the fog drawn landward in dim lines.  
The cloud dissolves among the flowering vines,  
And now the definite mountain-side disowns  
The fluid world, the immeasurable zones.  
Then white oblivion swallows all designs.  
But still the rich confusion of the sea,  
Unceasing voice, sombre and solacing,  
Rises through veils of silence past the trees;  
In restless repetition bound, yet free,  
Wave after wave in deluge fresh releasing  
An ancient speech, hushed in tremendous ease.

*Janet Lewis*

## PETER AND MOTHER

"A hand is writing these lines  
On your eyes for journeys  
You'll never start for. They're  
Transparencies. Wear rubbers  
And you will be wise."

In dreams initial A and in the parlor  
The chandelier was bright with small toy tears;  
At evening the door opened on clematis  
And his mother with a shawl ran down the years  
To meet someone with an empty lunch-box.  
As they returned across the lot —  
He listened — in her head was truth  
Hansel and Gretel and a bar  
Of sweetest song.

Where the word  
Is shadow of the deed and hard  
Upon it like first crocuses  
In snow . . . "grow up and be  
My tenement house, my brick building!"

This paper representation imperfectly made,  
Be like words at a railway station still  
Speaking though the train has gone —  
The pity strong enough

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To tear the four walls down, scatter the children,  
The picture of the cow on the wall  
Grazing a different pasture.

Talking her trite ghost, the smell  
Of lilac is fainter and fainter;  
Thinking her worn face is like a face  
A whiteness on the brush of some eternal painter.  
And always growing farther, trying to hear  
Something that was never expressed very  
Clearly.

Her journey ended that was hidden  
In the blindness of his naive skin.

*David Schubert*

## WINTER STARSET

Stars on a winter night

Burn fresh and fair upon the grave;

Though a death wind whip at the long tassels of their light,

They shine, they are young, they are brave.

The timbre of these blossoms in the air:

The topaz and the scarlet and the steel,

The blue steel and the silver bending there

On the bell scale, on the wheel.

Bending there now, and bending down upon

The grave, the briefest day's grave, in the pull

Of the Judgment. Older than snow and the earth swan,

They are more merciful.

*Elliott Coleman*

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FOUR POEMS

"TO COME CLOSER UNTO THEE"

To come closer unto Thee  
I tried animal lust. But see,  
It dissolved in a pool of science,  
And I lost my clairvoyance.

Then I ate the fruit of the mind  
Rushing reach-high into the garden;  
Flavour of intellect would be kind  
When the arteries began to harden.

I thought: sure mind fails not,  
Hoarder of life's heart ever.  
But I forgot what I thought,  
While worms were eating Plato's dialogues.

By the river of Christ's blood, I cried,  
Like Thee let me be, like Thee. I tried,  
But that was further evidence of pride,  
And I grew so weak I almost died.

If action's bad and contemplation's worse,  
Christ His Christ and I myself,  
High in life as lost in a hearse,  
I might as well go to the movies.

*Richard Eberhart*

ANGLO-SAXON SONG

I must think of man as a suffering being.  
Happiness, the bright boon of warriors, disappears.  
I must think; I have felt over-much; love  
Drives into the heart the poisonous shaft.

I must hoard all sufferings of men.  
O pride of accomplishment, the hero's banner;  
Dare to feel, to sense again illusion.  
Ornaments of conquest; peace, hard hearth-stone.

I must not peer into the crooked reach  
Where mind crumbles, spills out hot gore, heart!  
The dark threat of being born; "the pain  
Of living"; inconsequence of mighty death.

POEM

If I could only live at the pitch that is near madness  
When everything is as it was in my childhood  
Violent, vivid, and of infinite possibility  
That the sun and the moon broke over my head.

Then I cast time out of the trees and fields,  
Then I stood immaculate in the Ego;  
Then I eyed the world with all delight,  
Reality was the perfection of my sight.



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And time has big handles on the hands,  
Fields and trees a way of being themselves.  
I saw battalions of the race of mankind  
Standing stolid, demanding a moral answer.

I gave the moral answer, and I died  
And into a world of complexity came  
Where nothing is possible but Necessity  
And the truth wailing there like a red babe.

SONG FOR THE DEATH OF MY UNCLE IN ILLINOIS

Here is such perfection as the world dreamed of.  
But earth receives him, and the worms begin to choir  
Even as the boys are singing *Te Deum Laudamus*.  
There, is the perfection man knows not of.

And as the heavy burden of the years  
(I wept no tear) bore Honour, Justice, Fame  
I made a solemn resolution; I would  
Dole the dream beyond the earth and sky,

Erect an arbitrary word and sign,  
For sightlessness the seeing word,  
For thoughtlessness a sacred chamber music,  
Mysterious from the womb unto the tomb

Idea's, Ideas' flying!

*Richard Eberhart*

These things I thought on a humid day  
These things I felt as the world whirled away  
(The saving elf out of the serving bourse),  
Walking stiff-collared behind the Packard hearse.

*Richard Eberhart*

SELF WEARS VANITY TO MAKE ITSELF  
INVISIBLE

Beat against the blank of mind.  
Break into the box and find  
An opening that no one found  
To penetrate with sound.

Tripled bars of muscled brain  
You knock and knock against in vain.  
Something hidden there inside.  
The doorkeeper is pride.

Turn your eyelamps inside out,  
Twist your mouth and tongue to shout.  
Any way you cannot find  
To break into the mind.

*Milton Hindus*

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TWO POEMS

ROAD SOUTH: WYOMING TO LOUISIANA

Rapacious moss obscures the sky,  
Makes trees go crouching ways:  
The earth is stirred with green awry,  
And no wind ever drives the days.

We have come South from sterile hills  
That lift a callow breast in air,  
That breed what color man distils  
With water, plow, and stubborn care.

To travel South is not to take  
A road, but rapid skier's slide:  
Down altitudes of air we break  
To land that opens level, wide.

And now we lie in shade and drink  
The ready ozone, do not dare  
To probe what soil is under, or think  
Of hunting heights we once could bear.

*Alan Swallow*

STONE

The older poets were wrong, speaking the lone  
Imperturbable, imperishable, imponderable stone  
Because a rock faced sun surviving human eyes.  
For even stone dissolves and dies.  
With wear of water, split of frost,  
Stones break, and down the river-sewers are lost.

And feeble too those men who placed  
A stone at the grave's end, now with the words effaced.

Who knows the hawk speaks well of rock and cliff,  
Finding a haven there when wings are stiff.  
And man in his hawk-days breathed life in stone,  
Chipping and grinding it down, extending his bone.  
Turn hammer words on rock, the fugitive:  
So stone will live.

*Alan Swallow*

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LATE SONG

And do they think me quaint and pitiful  
As childless in a windless nook  
I peel the fruit or read a book?  
And when they see me paging in  
The album or the almanac  
Do they guess my mind a gentle dotage filled  
With reminiscent bric-a-brac?  
I see them glance, they think of taking one more snap  
As in the summer with a lonesome look  
I walk about a dooryard circumscribed by phlox.  
The parlor and the bedroom and the kitchen clocks  
Will stitch my remnant seam of time.

The hills elude the heart, old songs the brain  
Beneath a tick of reminiscent rain.  
Beyond the world lies, hurrying and infirm;  
The bracelets clatter on the arm, the typewriters  
Clatter on the wall, the night is gashed with neon,  
Splattered with pianos wheedling feet in alien rooms.  
But we in a wet garden waltzed in wine  
And we on a wet street, after the rain and before the storm,  
Remembered German laughter, German horns.  
Guess they likewise that the dance is brief  
Before the word that shrivels flesh and turns the stars to  
thorns?

*Peter De Vries*

Troubled is the night. My brother is my keeper.  
Mild and silver-haired among the Wedgwood plates  
While darkness deepens and my own death waits,  
Among the smiles that trail a mild goodbye  
Through hallway doors above an evening tie,  
Hearing the querulous violins, the deft and contrite horns,  
Hearing the drums that rattle and the clarinets that wind,  
What could I tell the young save what the young shall  
early find?

The hills are dim, the train of life is furled:  
Good is the light but not the day,  
Sweet is the earth but not the world.

*Peter De Vries*

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TWO POEMS

I

In the naked bed, in Plato's cave,  
Reflected headlights slowly slid the wall,  
Carpenters hammered beneath the shaded window,  
Wind troubled the window curtains all night long.  
A fleet of trucks strained uphill, grinding,  
Their freights, as usual, hooded by tarpaulin.  
The ceiling lightened again, the slanting diagram  
Slid slowly off. Hearing the milkman's chop,  
His striving up the stair, the bottle's chink,  
I rose from bed, lit a cigarette,  
And walked to the window. The stony street bestowed  
The stillness in which buildings stand upon  
The street-lamp's vigil, and the horse's patience.  
The winter sky's pure capital  
Turned me back to bed with exhausted eyes.

Strangeness grew in the motionless air. The loose  
Film greyed. Shaking wagons, hooves' waterfalls  
Sounded far off, increasing, louder and nearer.  
A car coughed, starting up, Morning, softly  
Melting the air, lifted the half-covered chair  
From underseas, kindled the mirror  
Upon the wall. The bird called tentatively, whistled,  
Bubbled and whistled, so! Perplexed, still wet

*Delmore Schwartz*

With sleep, affectionate, hungry and cold. So, so,  
O son of man, the ignorant night, the rumors  
Of building and movement, the travail  
Of early morning, the mystery of beginning  
Again and again,  
                    while history is unforgiven.

II

The heart, a black grape gushing hidden streams,  
Streams hidden as the cold farms under sidewalks,  
Burdened with stones, such as the tallest buildings,  
Bursts, pops like firecrackers, pops and bursts,  
When a train chuffs from the station in full flowers,  
— Or, smoke being the type of dream, great dreams.

The heart would also go away in thunder,  
Admired by throngs, exploding rhetoric!

But when it comes, escape is small, the door  
Creaks, the worms of fear spread veined, the furtive  
Fugitive, looking backward, sees his  
Ghost in the mirror, his shameful eyes, his mouth diseased.

*Delmore Schwartz*



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HEARD FROM SPAIN

These are the hours of madness: hardened weather  
Taken from quietude by a shrill screaming  
Reaches the sky in nervous flight; the hearts,  
The desperation of evasive eyes — even  
the days, are massed in one sky-shaken burning.

*And having walked through streets, their limbs  
Aware of sharp decay, and having turned  
Upon the hollow buildings of slow breath,  
They found, at morning, this noise of hearts  
tightly wound in alleys . . .*

Hearing, across miraculous water, of  
Their predestined death, he turns, then slows,  
Stares quietly against the blackened branches  
Forming his doom. Not knowing the early hours'  
grief shall speak in the towering noon.

*David Sachs*

## REVIEW AND PRE-VIEW: NORTH BY EAST

### MOTOR LANDSCAPE

Pale apple-light in New England pastures  
Drumming to ground beneath the tree —  
(Shanghai is set about with music  
Of bombs striking into the sea).

Sweet curve of land by the Vermont roadside  
Grazing to pastures near the sky —  
(The locusts of the planes are falling  
On the harvests of Shanghai).

God of the white church on the corner,  
Father Einstein, Brother Man —  
Pattern the bombs' and the apples' falling  
Into a meaning, if you can.

### R.F.D., VERMONT

In perilous land beneath the breathing skin  
The integrated body lives alone,  
Brief statue of the man who moves within  
The girdered architecture of the bone.  
Sufficient as a hermit, fed on food  
Within himself and for himself, his hand  
Reaches to neighbors housed beyond the wood  
Only when there is famine in the land.

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The separate flesh is lonely, but it thrives  
On being what it is, a perfect thing,  
Untroubled by the sound of other lives  
It sleeps out love and hunger, silencing  
All cries and turmoil from the living town  
By burrowing for death, and lying down.

"THE NEW YORKER"

Turning the knob of the morning I wait for speech  
On the electric air, for news of the sound  
Of living. In this immediate room I reach  
For meaning in the fine print of the air.

The seismograph has registered Shanghai,  
Disturbances in Spain. The shaken ground  
Splits open.

But clever clarinets declare  
Swing music in the ballroom of the sky —

Furs for the bedroom, where to play and eat,  
How to be urban, polished, new and bright,  
How to smile down at the world and keep your seat  
On a toy bus swaying quaintly through the night.

WINTER FEEDING

St. Francis crumbs we toss to the birds  
On the glacier snow outside the window,  
Clucking our love with little words  
For defeated sparrows who challenge in row  
For the lucky bread, the suet crumbs  
(In the name of Christ and Rockefeller)  
We toss like pennies from lighted rooms  
To keep the beggars from the cellar.

NOT TO FORGET MISS DICKINSON

Flavor the speaking of this one,  
The jointed quatrains — like a bird's,  
The portrait of Miss Dickinson,  
Trapeze performer, dancer of words.

See how the sprightly squirrel mind  
Resolves to the kernel love so great  
The looking on it sets you blind  
An instant, as if in sun or hate.

Observe the "gypsy face transfigured"  
Go through the magic burning act  
Of singing in a room beleaguered  
Up to its sills by the gnawing fact.

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BUY A PLANE, MR. HEMINGWAY  
(*Review of "To Have and Have Not"*)

Tense to the ropes, sound wind and water.  
Tune up to the throb of the living air.  
Prepare all engines for the slaughter  
And steer for tarpon — you know where.

Pronounce a man and let him live it  
On his belly, and die it in the guts.  
One man alone can't take or give it,  
Or have it, without going nuts.

. . . . .

In meaninglessness there is meaning.  
In chaos constellations play.  
On darkened sky-ways of the evening  
Sound the propellers of the day.

Blind-flying to the tick of reason,  
Planes can surmount, and stars reveal  
More than the passing of a season,  
More than the wind-song of a wheel.

*Marshall Schacht*

TWO WINDS ON NOVA SCOTIA

Here, west from England, northeast from New York,  
Holding the Bay of Fundy in its curve,  
This finger land bends down to the coast of Maine,  
Touching New England, almost, as with a fork,  
The pressure running up the silver nerve,  
Electric, to the impressionable brain.

By flags on the red sheds of the fishing wharves  
At Yarmouth you see the wind blows mostly west:  
"God Save the King," "The Maple Leaf Forever,"

The words are written as a lover carves  
On nature the name of one he loves the best  
And his beside it, the knot no time can sever.

The words are written and the words are said,  
But the wind from the southeast blows a lusty song.  
A hungry storm beats steady from the south  
Having its way by dancing on the dead,  
Wooing this land as the young will woo the young  
By means of kisses on an otherwise loyal mouth.

*Marshall Schacht*

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### REVIEWS

#### LITERATURE OF THE WILL

*New Writing*. Edited by John Lehmann. Spring, 1937.  
Knopf.

*New Letters in America*. Edited by Horace Gregory. W. W.  
Norton.

“NEWNESS” is a concept which, in its literary application, has come to be in need of complete redefinition about every ten years. At least this has become the case since the furious nineteenth-century *Zeitgeist* accumulated its bewildering momentum in the period following the Great War. Unlike science, which incorporates the discoveries of each successive generation in its scheme, literature has always been a notoriously unprogressive affair, moving not in a straight line but in an endless zigzag motion, repeating itself, as M. Morand noted of history, like an idiot. The only discernible pattern has been that of the action-reaction antithesis so cherished by the academic historian. But in the last few decades this process has accelerated to the point where the members of the latest generation would not even recognize the members of the previous one if they passed each other on the street. Between the two “new” collections before us and the corresponding “Others” and “Imagist” anthologies of the last generation the difference is very nearly absolute; it is not too much to say that the young people gathered together by Messrs. Lehmann and Gregory stand

for almost everything to which the latter were vocally most opposed. Let us recall but a single issue — description versus projection of the single image or symbol. After the Imagist manifestoes and the jeremiads of Ezra Pound, after the subsequent demonstrations by Eliot, Stevens, and their heirs, it is indeed a shock to come upon such wholesale inventory-taking as will be found in Muriel Rukeyser's long poem, *The Cruise*, in the Gregory collection. Or, to turn to the prose, it is incredible to how few of the present brood of short-story writers has been transmitted the expertness with the cameo so painstakingly acquired by the early Joyce, Katharine Mansfield, and Ernest Hemingway.

The single observation will have to serve for both collections because, as a matter of fact, they are hardly distinguishable in content, tone, and general intention. "Newness" is quite distinctly a matter of theme and subject-matter as it was of style and technique for the last generation. This is an absurd distinction in some respects, of course, and it would be more accurate to say that for the last generation theme and subject-matter had become so established that its members could devote themselves to the refinement of other things. But it is true that for most of the contributors to the present volumes the novelty of their theme and subject-matter have blinded them to the responsibilities of their craft. Most of the stories fall into the pattern of "a day in the life of" some member of the working-class: a kitchen boy in an English hotel, an unemployed miner, a hanger-on of the Marine Workers' Union in Argentina, a racetrack chippy,



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a small truck farmer, and so on. There is hardly an occupation that is not "covered," in the strictly journalistic sense; and one is left with the feeling that nothing but the number of available occupations and days in the calendar could prevent this sort of thing from going on forever. Notable exception are William Plomer's *Letter from the Seaside*, Christopher Isherwood's *Berlin Diary*, and a Russian fantasy entitled *Love*, in the Lehmann collection; and Elizabeth Bishop's *The Sea and Its Shore*, Milton Freedgood's *Good Nigger*, and James Agee's *The House*, in the Gregory collection.

The poetry is, on the whole, more interesting; and a reason may be found in the greater technical restrictions imposed by the medium. At its baldest, of course, the theme gets expressed in lines like the following:

The rapid death from ordnance  
And the slow from gas, the fascist whip, the nervous  
Horror of workless rotting at home, these are  
Our age, our dreams, and only poetry.

But Miss Rukeyser, in a long and ambitious work, makes use of a symbolic device that has served poets from Jonah to Hart Crane—the sea-journey. Unfortunately, however, instead of working *in* on her symbol she works away from it to the hortatory and denunciatory statement. Certainly the most satisfactory items are those, like W. H. Auden's *Poem* and Marya Zaturenska's *Lunar Tides*, which still keep within the more secure bounds of the merely personal reference.

Nothing in this review is intended as an objection to the theme that has been almost uniformly elected by the con-

### *Literature of the Will*

tributors to these volumes. All that has been suggested is that so far it has not been sufficiently assimilated into the literary sensibility. And it may be added that this may actually be less a consequence of the particular theme than of the general cultivation of "newness," which in the case of all self-conscious movements and schools has the tendency to enlist the will of the artist at the expense of his imagination. For though literature does not progress, it does display a kind of growth or continuity from generation to generation, which may be for better or worse, but which cannot be forced by manifestoes or cabals. To attempt to force this growth too deliberately is to encourage something which, while it may be "new," is not necessarily literature.

*William Troy*

#### "BEAUTY OF STORM DISPROPORTIONALLY"

*Such Counsels You Gave to Me*, and Other Poems, by Robinson Jeffers. Random House.

Romanticism, whatever other definition be given it, always stresses the sensibilities. When an extension of the sensibilities springs from the necessity of a growth in culture it remains healthy. As soon, however, as feeling is over-emphasized as an escape from reality, romanticism becomes decadent. Jeffer's general philosophy, like Swinburne's, may be summed up in this paraphrase of the Marquis de Sade's words: "Friends, if we would be one with nature, let us continually do evil with all our might. But what evil is here for us to do where the whole body of things is evil?"

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His romanticism is definitely decadent in that it proposes as desirable a primitive violence in both man and Nature. Jeffers stresses the necessity of evil for the sake of intensity. But, unlike Swinburne he is not content to move us by sensuous pictures and music; he is, in fact, a moralist and a didactic poet. This the romantic poet should never be, for he must argue, as Louise Bogan once pointed out, from his own feelings alone.

Somewhere, during his more or less scientific education, Jeffers was profoundly moved by the idea of power. His is both the romantic's and the pseudo-scientist's view of Nature; it stresses power and disallows control. Freudian psychology and Nietzschean philosophy gave this poet the framework for his stories of man's tremendous revolt from mankind and his return to Nature and to his own natural greatness. The Greek world and the Biblical offered him plots. For Jeffers, modern civilization, group and collective living were evil; he proposed, therefore, that man break the moral codes and become a Superman, identified with the destructive forces of Nature. Nature's violence had scale and scale gave poetic intensity and beauty. And Jeffers went even further; he attempted the impossible — to prove violence moral. His ideology led him to deny salvation by Christian humility or by any doctrine of social justice and to affirm a pantheistic belief in which the gods were ruthless power. He glorified anti-social and mad individualism. His creatures always seemed to be asking "but what evil is here for us to do where the whole body of things is evil?" — to be breaking

*"Beauty of Storm Disproportionally"*

the despised laws of society in order to prove their essential free-will. Jeffers has given us poem after poem about noble savages motivated by Freudian complexes, savages given to perversions (patricide, fratricide, incest, etc.) and acting out their destinies upon the magnificent stage of the wild western coast.

In the earlier poems this poet was more content to move his readers by emotional scene and picture; in his later he feels himself to be a prophet, and a great moralist in verse. One cannot prove by argument, however, either that Nature is evil or that man, to be identified with Nature, must break the mold of humanity. The desire for intensity within Jeffers, his love of wild country and of primitive strength is far removed from most modern thinking. Jeffers is, indeed, one of the last romantics, and his constant stressing of violence and evil is decadent because neither his scene nor his characters have anything but a mythical reality.

There is, to be sure, enough violence in our world today to serve as subject matter for poets. But Jeffers sees the approaching destruction of our highly mechanized world as the direct result of collective thinking and acting. His is an anti-social, anarchistic individualism. Today, the individual can accomplish little for himself. Jeffers knows this and points didactically in his later poems (especially in the lyrics in this last book) to the fact that the only noble life to be lived today is that of a retreat into primitive country and conditions. Indeed, it is obvious that Jeffers, even out on his western coast, cannot forget the modern world. The

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change from his earlier to his later poetry is a change from picturing and dramatizing violence to arguing for it. Jeffers insists now on stating his political position, one consistent with his individualism. He holds the great-man theory of history. He does not believe in the proletariat because "they cannot even conduct a strike without cunning leaders." He dislikes collective power: "Lenin has served the revolution, Stalin presently begins to betray it. Why? For the sake of power, the Party's power." Then what is Jeffers' solution for the world and for the individual? "Not to be deluded by dreams, to know that great civilizations have broken down into violence, and their tyrants come, many times before. When open violence appears, to avoid it with honor or choose the least ugly faction." What for Robinson Jeffers, will be "the least ugly faction"?

We could say again, as has been said many times, that Jeffers as a poet has vigor, dramatic intensity. But he repeats himself now. And he argues and moralizes where once he presented beautiful pictures of Nature. Obviously, with his passion for individualism, Jeffers confronts a most uncongenial world. He would teach this world something, but he has, in all probability, removed himself too far from his own age to be seriously listened to as a prophet.

The long narrative in this book is based on an old Scotch ballad, as will be recognized from the title. A mother persuades her son to murder her husband and his father, almost persuades him to incest. But the son, spoiled perhaps by education, gives himself up. Since the *Women of Point Sur*,

\*  
"Beauty of Storm Disproportionally"

Jeffers has recognized the fact that his supermen usually fail to find their god of Nature, that they are crushed, ultimately, by their awareness of man-made laws. But the poet feels strongest the glory in the violent act. He bewails the fact that men cannot live continuously at the pitch which makes them achieve such acts. Eda Lou Walton

TWO TALES

*The New World*, by Edgar Lee Masters. D. Appleton-Century Company.

*The Story of Lowry Maen*, by Padraic Colum. The Macmillan Company.

There is no need to discuss the value as poetry of these two narratives. The authors have desired mainly to tell their stories as well as they could in their special versions of rhythmical speech. That pressure of poetry by which a word or phrase begins to glow with references, sensations, and meanings is here almost totally lacking. It is "narrative" — with a vengeance.

This kind of verse is wholly dominated by its "subject matter." And unlike that of modernist poetry, where the real content is often hard to track down, subject matter in this explicit verse occupies the whole frame. *The New World* is a verse history of the United States from the earliest reports concerning a New Land up to the present; *The Story of Lowry Maen* is a reconstructed saga of the Bronze Age. It is obvious which subject is the more important.

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I should like to get Mr. Colum's book out of the way first. It is one of those hardly readable Lay of the Last Minstrel epics which remind one not of any historical period but of a poetry period in elementary school.

Caldrons were seething over fires, spits turning,  
Meal-cakes were baking upon heated stones.  
Aleel and Sedna going here and there,  
Ate small birds taken off spits, with cakes  
In honey dipped, and listened to the stories

and so on. They fight, they feast, the wise man speaks, the prince loves the princess — all that stuff. The effect is completed by mediocre engravings of heroes, heroines, bards and milkmaids, and, of course, the caldron, which "vividly," according to the jacket, "convey the spirit of the age." An archaeologist who establishes a single authentic fact about these relatively unknown epochs of human history does more for the culture of his nation than a thousand academic romancers like Colum.

*The New World* is a different matter. Its content is proximate and significant, with little room for empty fancifulness. It is history-writing with idealism and a hot argument. The fact that it is conceived in verse-prose instead of straight prose does it little harm. Indeed, Masters gets so sore, at times, that he requires the open line to let go in. Book XIII dealing with the Spanish-American war begins:

Now a stink-bomb was thrown upon the New World  
By restless materialists, never content  
Unless they are feeding, grabbing or killing.

Prose won't hold this sort of thing.

## *Two Tales*

Masters' heat arises from a grounded hatred of the imperialism and monopoly which destroy American life. He feels warmly the doctrine that a nation which enslaves others can never itself be free. He sees the history of the New World as determined to evil by the search and fight for gold. From the start the gold-seekers distorted and traduced the newness of the New World, whose radiance was revived by every fresh flood of hard-toiling immigrants and by settlement of every frontier. With this analysis Masters penetrates the falsehoods of politicians and official historians:

They may howl that the fight is for God and liberty,  
It is really for the bones in the dish.

But his own idealism lands him finally in something very close to cynicism.

What he fails to perceive is that beneath the search for gold, and determining it, work the needs of production, that the masters and the adventurers are themselves, *in their time*, agencies of human progress — and that this raises history above mere categories of bad men and dupes. Through his inability to conceive the necessity by which the small-farm and pioneer-cabin face of America has been altered, he extends his indictment of the financial masters of industry to the development of industry itself. Thus the admirer of Jefferson becomes the enemy of history.

Deep but not deep enough is Masters' account of America's past. It should be read, with everything in it carefully measured.

*Harold Rosenberg*



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"MAY I NEVER BE BORN AGAIN"

*The Ten Principal Upanishads*, put into English by Shree Purohit Swami and W. B. Yeats. Macmillan.

In collaboration with an Indian friend, William Butler Yeats (whose imagination has long been stirred by the philosophy of the East) has produced a translation of ten of "the oldest philosophical compositions of the world," the lyric wisdom of the forest sages. Since he does not himself read Sanskrit — neither, to my regret, do I — Yeats' labors in the partnership must have been confined to editing and rewriting his friend's readings. Dispensing with the almost comic "verilys" and "forsooths" of his predecessors, he has attempted to give us a readable translation in idiomatic English prose, never pompous or pedantic, yet exalted in spirit and invested with a simple religious dignity. In his characteristically thoughtful and disputative preface he quotes Aristotle's dictum: "To write well express yourself like the common people, but think like a wise man."

A few quotations from the text will serve to illustrate the success that has attended this effort:

They have put a golden stopper into the neck of the bottle.  
Pull it, Lord! Let out reality. I am full of longing.

Never turn anyone from the door; gather enough food, say to the stranger: "Sir, the dinner is served." He who gives with purity, gets purity in return; he who gives with passion, gets passion in return; he who gives with ignorance, gets ignorance in return.

The Self is not known through discourse, splitting of hairs, learning however great. He comes to the man He loves; takes that man's body as His own.

*"May I Never Be Born Again"*

Occasionally Yeats' own unmistakable rhythm breaks through, as in the Eighth Book of the Chandogya-Upanishad:

I have been drifting from darkness to passion, from passion to darkness. Shaking off evil, as a horse shakes off his loose hair, freeing myself from evil as the moon breaks free from the eclipse. . . .

A student of the poetic imagination might profitably examine these translations in their relation to Yeats' original poetry, noting the extent of the debt, both ideological and symbolical, that he owes to Vedic doctrine. We have met before in his work "the crime of death and birth," "the honey of generation," "the Knower and the Known," and observed his magnificent pride buckling under the weight of his scorn of life, his Buddhistic antipathy to the plight of the "dying animal."

The primary teaching of the Upanishads is that nothing really exists except the supreme Brahman, or Self, of which all creatures are only fleeting manifestations. Life is evil, because it is based on desire, which ends in pain. To achieve the happiness of the Self, to escape the awful destiny of being born again, man must annihilate his desires. Behind the profoundly tragic and even cynical prayer, "Grant that I may never be born again," one glimpses the unspoken, ancient, continuing wretchedness of human existence in India and the unspeakable curse of caste.

All systems of philosophy are useful to the poet in his truth-telling; and all the religions, in his myth-making; but he cannot exchange his ancestors. Yeats, it should be noted,

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has remained consistently an amateur, an Irish amateur, in his Eastern studies. Even so, his work has had to triumph over a confusion, an hybridity of symbols and values. Brahman itself has suffered from his enthusiasm, since he has muddied its waters with his spiritistic dabbings.

In his prefatory essay Yeats implies that our younger poets, preoccupied with social problems, have pitched their tents in too bare a field, abandoning to their loss "the sensuous tradition" of their predecessors; therefore he offers this book to them in the hope that they will find therein a world more inspiring and satisfying, "a neighborhood where some new Upanishad, some half-asiatic masterpiece, may start up amid our averted eyes." I seriously doubt that we need anticipate this darkly ambiguous event. In truth, the creation of a half-asiatic Upanishad in our time and in our western world seems to me an almost repulsive prospect. To be sure, as Thoreau remarked while rowing up the Merrimac, there is a constant struggle going on in every country—in every man, I might add—between the Oriental and the Occidental—"some who would be forever contemplating the sun, and some who are hastening toward the sunset." But for the Oriental element to triumph *in the Occident* would be a catastrophe greater than war or plague. We do indeed hasten toward the setting sun; we strive, while the night comes on, toward the rising sun beyond; though we should fail, the way of our failure is not Karma, nor the end, let us pray, Nirvana.

Stanley J. Kunitz

ALWAYS A LEAF

*Poems*, by Etta Blum. Golden Eagle Editions, N. Y.

Causes for Ezra Pound's critical irascibility may be found not only in the soggy writing he detests but in the sketchy writing his example has encouraged. This has occurred to me with some force during my reading of Miss Blum's poems. One or two of them (*In Corona, Identity*) seem directly indebted to William Carlos Williams for subject matter and tricks of style, in both respects suffering badly by comparison with the model. Other poems in which the derivation is a general one show the same weaknesses: a wobbly feeling for free verse rhythms, and a tendency both to overwrite what should be suggested and to leave loose ends where development seems necessary. In part this lack of proportion is a verbal one, as in the line: "Blue light coughed gently around the edges of our sky." Here there is a blur and affectation of meaning where the need, obviously, was for a precise evocation. There are circumstances in which such blurs are the only thing, as Rimbaud's and Hart Crane's audacity proved, but Miss Blum is indiscriminating about them. She puts more stress on some of her lines than they will bear. Her syntax is sometimes merely awkward instead of original and she has let stand such useless circumlocution as "Distinct through me the hours I spent, recalcitrant/ to undiscovery . . ." There are also cases where a poem would profit by the excision of passages wholly irrelevant, or with a too commonplace relevance

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to the central theme or emotion. Such are *Fountain*, whose tail is inorganic, and *The Swan*, which is interrupted to no purpose.

I have noted these faults first and explicitly because they are not hard to amend and because they dilute and weaken certain very valuable qualities. Most of these poems are notes on the perception of fresh relationships, fresh coördinates of experience, a kind of moment which is poetry's by right and which is best simulated or enriched in poetry. In Miss Blum's best work there are suggestions of atmosphere and feeling which cannot fail to awaken careful readers. There is furthermore, despite her uncertain technique, the honesty which is essential to the development of a personal style. Single lines or passages, as usual in young poems, often have a grace of formulation and statement which the whole composition lacks:

the body to known integrities tenderly  
to savage understandings of submissions . . .

... the sounding  
of the obscure implacability of the real ...

Not that the leaves stir continually  
but there is always a leaf (as vestal) in motion . . .

The conceptions from which some of the poems start are rare and interesting, and in at least two cases Miss Blum has fulfilled the impulse and written the poem: in the last piece in the book and in *Harlequin*, a beautiful image, which makes better use of Picasso in poetry than many of his followers have made in painting.

Robert Fitzgerald

*Cursed Be the Concept*

CURSED BE THE CONCEPT

*Prolegomena to Any Future Poetry*, by Howard Blake.  
Bruce Humphries, Inc.

This début volume by a young New Englander is as distinctly regional in character as, say, the poetry of Jesse Stuart; but it is a regionalism of mood rather than depiction. Those who think of the modern poetry of New England in terms of Robert Frost will be strangely perplexed at first reading. This is the New England of the bookish cloister, dedicated to ceaseless preoccupation with self while the larger world rumbles unseen and unconsidered. It is the Freudian coastline on which so many promising cargoes come to grief. Mr. Blake makes no bones of his predilections: in a brief prose apologia he prophesies that "I shall be tagged 'obscure' when I am but 'difficult'." That is a forbidding platform, and at times one is tempted to reverse the adjectives and call it a day.

If we accept Mr. Blake as a reaction against both the ideologically-possessed modern who sees fit to hurl all form and technique into the street and the mooning rhymester with no more to offer than a keen appreciation of nature, we may better sympathize with these tortuous elaborations upon the inquisitive "I." No doubt Mr. Blake can be pardoned for an acute distaste for facile lyricism in an age when thousands consider sheer emotionalism sufficient excuse for reams of verse; but the intellectual insulation here displayed, if not so commonly-encountered, is as pernicious. In his

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preface Mr. Blake defines his position as removed from the arena of "isms"—Communism, Fascism (Realism?)—and it is true that his poetry, either by challenge or implication, disdains concern with certain pressing problems. His poems are meticulous in their finely-wrought form, and the economy of expression compels admiration; yet preciosity for its own sake is fruitless: Hopkins, to cite a well-known instance, is least successful when his vocabulary strangles his theme and defeats immediate comprehension. Mr. Blake, who has assiduously warmed his talent at the fire of the metaphysicals, seems at odds with simplicity: intricate psychological probings are more to his liking, especially when they are embellished with such hothouse petals as synergy, escalade, caducity, elentics, deictic, penumbral, labial. Here are two lines from *Meditation in Winter*:

Chrysopraxe? . . . yes, yes, it is confest, it is manifest  
Will, so well as any tag, mausoleate search.

Mr. Blake seems to have counterfeited T. S. Eliot's phenomenal classical knowledge, much as Poe is reputed to have professed familiarity with the Hebrew tongue; a majority of his poems boast a scattering of Latin, German, and cunning paraphrastic references to the Elizabethans. I fear he has denied his very real abilities a decent hearing thereby; few but persistent disciples of dark obscurity will trouble themselves with these involved exercises upon the well-worn themes of man's spiritual insecurity and despair. There will always be apologists for artifice; yet the artist who prizes exactitude above healthier, less-restricted values will always

*Cursed Be the Concept*

founder in his thralldom to the word, or its medium equivalent. Schönberg's later music reveals this fatal dichotomy between concept and execution; perhaps the initial concept is at fault. If Mr. Blake aspires to the austerity of the German, he can only be said to have rejected much that is human and compassionate; but if these poems constitute only a stage of his maturity, we can hope that he will yet reconcile his stern esthetic with the human scale. The arena still has room for Mr. Blake, although he may have to tread upon the remains of others like himself who arrived too late.

*William FitzGerald*

FOUR WOMEN

*Mirror to Mortality*, by Martha Keller. E. P. Dutton & Co.

*Road to America*, by Frances Frost. Farrar & Rinehart.

*The Hills Grow Smaller*, by Zoë Akins. Harper & Brothers.

*One More Manhattan*, by Phyllis McGinley. Harcourt, Brace & Co.

There are two sides of Martha Keller's poetic face that are as divergent and provocative as a tragi-comic mask. Extremes (the brutal eye and downcast mouth, or the leer and laugh) are her forte. It is these that stamp her features with force and make her voice memorable. In milder moods she at times indulges in familiar archaisms:

That dust to dissolution you compel  
Is possible, I swear, and less than strange,  
Albeit something supernatural.



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But once she has undertaken the pure rôle of tragedy or comedy she becomes Martha Keller and nobody else. I wish she had had the forbearance to give us only these triumphant evidences of herself, but it can at least be to these that we bring our applause.

*The Bull*, the compelling narrative poem that opens her book, is as brutal as the slaughter with which it ends, as much so as a Hemingway short story. It starts with the two stripped lines:

He married her before the child was born.  
Before the child was born to her it died

and continues with passion and brilliant economy.

In complete contrast to this sombre sonnet sequence, but with equally shocking effect, we are given Miss Keller at play. In comedy she is as robust as she is silly. Again and again she comes in with a twinkle in her eye and an assured flippancy in her precise step. Take *Perseus*, or perhaps *Oedipus* is even funnier:

I think, says I — O, I think, says I —  
I won't throw sand at the sphinx, says I.  
Though I know she's old, and her nose is flat,  
She's one-half woman and one-half cat.

Frances Frost attempts neither tragedy nor comedy; she is preoccupied with more reflective issues. It is not for her choice that we blame her, but for her mild presentation. In *Road to America* she gives us a pleasantly rhythmic and historically accurate panorama encompassing the years 1500 to 1937. In the sonnets that follow this first long narrative poem, she is at her best. The first three are refreshingly

## Four Women

simple and sincere. Unfortunately she has included nine in her sequence. Again in her lyrics we drift pleasantly along, but protesting that she could do better, that she is too experienced a poet to allow herself vague adjectives — “tall incredible,” that her conventionality and earnestness need not prevent her seeking accuracy.

In *The Hills Grow Smaller*, Zoë Akins successfully carries us back to childhood. Unfortunately, just as we are remembering where *we* played — how our castle resembled hers, how deep our moat was, how fire-eating our dragon — just when we are in a realistic haze, thanks to her skill, she knocks us on the head with a moral. It wakes us up to our age perhaps, but the charm of the poem vanishes before it is finished.

Her nature poems, *Rain, Rain!*, *Spring Night*, *Winter Weather*, etc., are unarresting in meter and imagery. Her reaction to human nature, however, goes deeper. *A Child's Shakespeare* is fresh and dramatic. There can be no doubt that sitting on the edge of her chair Miss Akins really “saw great Egypt die.” Her feeling for human nature is again evident in *Mary Magdalen*. Here her psychology is at times subtle, always clear, and the presentation admirably restrained.

When light verse is as homely and as neat and sharp as a pin, it gives us a very pleasant prick. Phyllis McGinley's verse does it repeatedly. I like her apostrophe to her nephew, her text, her recipes. And O, I do like her peekaboo at Mrs. McAdoo!

Marion Strobel

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### YOUNG LYRICS

*The Early World*, by Robert Hunt. The Villagra Bookshop, Santa Fe.

One imagines that the author is like his book, slim and young: a not irrelevant remark about *The Early World*; for the slenderness of this first collection has the effect of giving one less than enough for critical discussion, and that effect is underscored by the obvious (not unpleasant) youthfulness of these few poems that as a collection are still tentative; and yet an unspoiled freshness, indigenous to the book, makes it an attractive and possibly interesting appearance in new poetry.

There are in this country many middle-aged poets whose long pursuit of the personal mood through innumerable impersonal poetic forms has denied them all distinction; Mr. Hunt might, unfortunately, at last become one of these — the gentle, easy lyrics of darkness, destruction, and the rose show his danger. But we have also in this country many young poets whose too immediate pursuit of social problems through the unassimilated example of their somewhat fashionable elders has led them to an indistinct failure. Mr. Hunt may fortunately escape that half-baked ignominy — not through deliberation, but because he is merely going at his poetry naturally, through himself.

At present his central emotion and concern are fairly well comprehended in these lines:

*Young Lyrics*

Our ever-shifting flesh  
Clings well to bone,  
Knowing no other refuge  
From the dead —  
This hour cannot lift  
Nor stay the stone  
That stands too soon  
Above the fallen head.

In *The Early World*, then, Mr. Hunt is marking the changes that come to weather and life and love, rather as though no one had marked them before. Technically, the poems show a facility with rhyme-experiment. Altogether they are not only sincere but sensitive, and if there are more startling beginnings in poetry than this there are not — in the long run — many better ones.

*Winfield Townley Scott*

GOOD COUNSEL

*Realization: A Philosophy of Poetry*, by Hugh McCarron, S. J. Sheed & Ward.

In this bland little book Father McCarron undertakes the perennially tempting search for a definition of poetry. He achieves, I think, one of the better working definitions, and in the process gives much good counsel both to those who would read poetry and to those who would write it. He also elucidates, in an unpretentious way, many choice passages from Homer to Spender. If one of the aims of the book is pedagogical, the manner is not; Father McCarron believes that "literature is made for enjoyment, not for tabulation,"

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and also that "the reading that best prepares a boy for literature is that done at the age of ten, not in school, but with feet on divan or elbows on the floor." Although his book perhaps has most to say to those who are over ten, it can be read in these positions. It is written in a poet's or an Irishman's prose, that circles casually about, then swoops to the point when you are least expecting it.

The general problem in defining poetry, as in defining anything else, is to say something definite without oversimplifying. Against the second of these requirements, at least, this book does not sin. It gets nearly everything in somewhere. The poem is held to be a complex object to which both external reality and the mind contribute. Observation is the first essential, for those who read as well as for those who write. Next come workmanship and attention to the specific uses of language: "to see how pictured expression is linked in utterance with sound and gesture." Early poetry arose out of "appreciative enthusiasm" for some unusual happening, and, further, out of man's desire to "devour, possess, and incorporate within himself this splendid thing." These considerations lead to a formal definition: "Possessive and enthusiastic portrayal, not of an abstraction, an idea or proposition as such, but of the real, in a form imitative practically in every way in which language can be imitative; this was in its earlier days what we call poetry. And this is still the essential quality in those writings to which such words as 'poetry' or 'literature' have been applied."

This definition is summed up in the key word, *realization*. In order to explain this term, the author spreads a wide net which takes in a great variety of fish. Realization is midway between the object itself and the thought about it. It is "a grasp of meaning, of significance." It contains a "sense of possession, of union with the experience, with men in sorrow, with life." It involves both imagination and intellect, with the intellect nevertheless in the background. "To realize seems to include the note of contemplating, gazing, rather than reasoning about. To realize seems to be a sympathetic appropriation made with a certain affection." "Realization is the secret of poetic intensity and concentration," for it evokes as well as presents.

McCarron returns time and again to stress the importance of seeing. The seeing is active, and it is that of the motion picture rather than that of the photograph. Not even the lyric escapes this requirement: "The lyric is even today the relish, so to speak, the enthusiastic retasting that implies a story told or suppressed." Although some of the great lines are, considered by themselves, abstract, they derive their thrust from their concrete setting; it is the picture which takes us to the "heart of light." The emotion in the experience of the poem is, if not exactly a by-product, at least a derivative: "The artist and the student should pay attention to the picture, the moving object. Feelings will take care of themselves."

Sophisticated poetry differs from naive chiefly in that it realizes more, or more recondite, interrelations of things.



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The moral law of poetry is truth; and the moral effect springs not from a homiletic purpose but from integrity in representing the patterns of life. Being so fortunate as to have a religion that satisfies him, McCarron does not make of poetry a religion-surrogate. He finds the divine unity adequately expressed in the sacraments, and does not demand that poetry represent more than the unity of the visible world. Accordingly he does not, like T. S. Eliot, throw ink-pots at the devils of contemporary literature. He even displays a special fondness for Miss Millay, and finds much to praise in other poets who have tussled with the angels: "Shelley wrote great poetry because he expressed the need of enthusiasm, a great truth. Again, A. E. Housman's idea that all ends with the grave is true to the eye of sense." When discussing such matters, he makes Mr. Eliot by contrast seem a shrill parvenu to orthodoxy.

Father McCarron's book does not contain the precise and sustained analysis that is found in the best of recent critical and esthetic writing. It does not, furthermore, attempt to deal at length with the specific problems, technical and otherwise, that poets find specially pertinent to them in this particular year of grace. But it displays sound sense, it is calculated to stimulate enthusiasm, and it offers a good grounding in fundamentals.

*Philip Blair Rice*

## NEWS NOTES

A bill to provide for a permanent national Bureau of Fine Arts has been introduced in the House of Representatives and referred to the Committee on Education. The stated purpose of this bill is to recognize the cultural heritage of our nation as belonging not to the fortunate few but to the people as a whole, to take it out of private museums and private collections and to make it available to all regardless of ability to pay admission. Actually, it would constitute a perpetuation of the Federal Arts Project, with certain changes in the administrative organization. No qualifications need be met by writers, artists, dancers, actors or musicians applying for employment under the proposed Act. The chief officials would be exempt from the civil-service requirements, but all employees hired by them would be subject to examinations.

The Pear Tree Press of Sussex, England, is now engaged in printing Blake's *Songs of Innocence*, in colors and by hand, from intaglio plates. The work is being done in a hamlet but one mile distant from Blake's own cottage at Felpham. Plate printing has been revived by this press, and the intaglio method is their own invention. Another item for collectors is *The Country Scene*, published by Macmillan (retail price, \$18.50), in which John Masefield has written forty-two poems about the English countryside to accompany forty-two oil paintings by Edward Seago.

We record unwillingly the death in November of Louise Ayres Garnett, a distinguished Chicago poet and an old friend of POETRY. She was well known as a writer of poems for orchestral settings, and as the author of several books, including *Eve Walks in Her Garden*, published in 1927. She also wrote the text for Henry Hadley's famous oratorio, *Resurgam*, and did much to improve the quality of song-lyrics and choral verse; thus her death is a loss to the world of music as well as that of poetry. She has left much to be remembered by, but nothing finer than the memory of her gracious self.

The two most noteworthy English verse magazines have recently published special issues in honor of their favorite poets. *New Verse* for November is a W. H. Auden number, containing critical comments from many British and American writers, a splendid new poem by Auden, *Dover*, and a photograph of the poet. *Twentieth Century Verse* for November-December is a Wyndham Lewis Number, with nineteen similar tributes and an acknowledgment by Lewis.

## POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

### NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

D. S. SAVAGE was born in Harlow, Essex, in 1917, and is now living in London. He has contributed verse and prose to English periodicals as well as to POETRY, but has not yet published a volume.

MARSHALL SCHACHT, whose work has been familiar to our readers since 1928, was born in Brookline, Mass., in 1905, educated at Dartmouth and Harvard, and now lives in New York City.

JANET LEWIS (Mrs. Yvor Winters) of Los Altos, California, is the author of a book of poems, *The Wheel in Midsummer* (1927), and is represented in the recent anthology, *Twelve Poets of the Pacific*, issued by New Directions.

DELMORE SCHWARTZ of New York City, was educated at Columbia, New York University, the University of Wisconsin, and Harvard. He has contributed verse and criticism to a number of periodicals since being introduced to our readers last February.

RUSSELL BECKWITH, who first appeared in these pages in 1933, was born twenty-five years ago in South Windham, Conn., where he still lives.

DAVID SCHUBERT, of Brooklyn attended Amherst until 1931, worked in a Conservation Camp in Washington, and has done "very many different things in places certain and uncertain." In 1936 he received the Jeannette Sewell Davis Prize for his first group of poems printed in POETRY.

MARIE LUHRS, of New York City, is a frequent contributor of poems to periodicals. She has appeared in POETRY since 1924.

RICHARD EBERHARDT, also well known to our readers, is the author of *A Bravery of Earth* and *Reading the Spirit*, recently published by the Oxford University Press. He is on the faculty of St. Mark's School, Southborough, Mass.

The following writers make their first appearance here in this issue:

RAY PIERCE was born in Tipton, Iowa, in 1913. He attended Coe College, where he edited, set up, and printed by hand the campus literary magazine. Since his graduation last year he has been teaching English and dramatics at Highmore, South Dakota.

PETER DE VRIES, a young Chicagoan, has contributed verse and fiction to *Esquire*, *Story*, etc., while solving the economic riddle with a candy and taffy-apple business.

ALAN SWALLOW was born in Powell, Wyo., in 1915, received his

## Notes on Contributors

B. A. degree last year from the University of Wyoming, and is now married and doing graduate work at Louisiana State University.

ELLIOTT COLEMAN, a native of Binghamton, N. Y., lives in Asheville, N. C., where he teaches English on the faculty of the Asheville school. A volume of his work, *The Poems of Elliott Coleman*, was published by Dutton in 1936.

MILTON HINDUS, of Brooklyn, was born twenty-one years ago in New York City and is a graduate of City College. He is now studying for his M. A., specializing in research work "of the type carried on in England by Mr. I. A. Richards and described in his book, *Practical Criticism*."

DAVID SACHS, of Chicago, is a 15-year-old high school student whose poems have already appeared in magazines.

The names of this month's reviewers are mostly familiar, though one or two of them appear for the first time in our prose section.

WILLIAM TROY, a new contributor, is well known for his literary criticism in the weekly reviews. He is on the faculty of Bennington College, and is the husband of the distinguished American poet, Léonie Adams.

EDA LOU WALTON, of New York City, enjoys a dual reputation as poet and critic. She is the author of several books, including *Jane Matthew and Other Poems*.

PHILIP BLAIR RICE, of the University of Cincinnati, is also well known for his book-reviews in POETRY and elsewhere.

STANLEY J. KUNITZ, whose verse and criticism we have often printed, lives in New York City and is the author of a book of poems, *Intellectual Things*.

ROBERT FITZGERALD, also familiar as poet and reviewer, is on the editorial staff of *Time*, and was co-translator with Dudley Fitts of the *Alcestis of Euripides*, published in 1936 by Harcourt, Brace.

WINFIELD TOWNLEY SCOTT, another regular contributor, is the author of *Biography for Traman*. In 1935 he was awarded our Guarantors Prize.

MARION STROBEL, of Chicago, has written several novels and books of verse, including *Once in a Blue Moon* and *Lost City*. From 1920 to 1925 she worked with Harriet Monroe as Associate Editor of POETRY.

WILLIAM FITZGERALD, whom we have printed before in the rôle of poet, is the author of *Daekargus* (1933) and was an editor of

## POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

the magazine *Anathema*. He lives in Boston, where he was born in 1916.

HAROLD ROSENBERG, poet, critic and painter of murals, is a native and resident of Manhattan.

### BOOKS RECEIVED

#### ORIGINAL VERSE:

*Poems*, by Louis MacNeice. Random House.

*Year's End*, by Josephine W. Johnson. Simon and Schuster.

*After Eden*, by Emma Gray Trigg. G. P. Putnam's Sons.

*Can No One Understand?* by Julia Wickham Greenwood. G. P. Putnam's Sons.

*Gates and Other Poems*, by Sister M. Madeleva. Macmillan Co.

*X Equals . . .*, by Floyd McKnight. Arts & Press Guild, N. Y. C.

*Thus Civilization . . .*, by P. R. Kaikini. New Book Co., Bombay, India.

*F. M. S. R.*, by Francis P. Ng. Arthur H. Stockwell, London, England.

#### ANTHOLOGIES:

*New Letters in America*, edited by Horace Gregory. W. W. Norton & Co.

*New Writing*, edited by John Lehmann. Alfred A. Knopf.

*Recognition of Robert Frost*, edited by Richard Thornton. Henry Holt & Co.

*The Best Poems of 1937*, selected by Thos. Moulton. Harcourt, Brace & Co.

*Poetry Out of Wisconsin*, edited by August Derleth and Raymond E. F. Larsson. Henry Harrison.

*300 Years, The Poets and Poetry of Maryland*, edited by Loker Raley. Henry Harrison.

#### PROSE:

*Letters from Iceland*, by W. H. Auden and Louis MacNeice. Random House.

*Chinese Women Yesterday and Today*, by Florence Ayscough. Houghton Mifflin Co.

*Heinrich Heine, Paradox and Poet*, by Louis Untermeyer. Harcourt, Brace & Co.

*Swallow of the Sea, Pages from a Yacht's Log*, by Dorothy Una Ratcliffe. Country Life, Ltd., London, England.

*Awarded the Levinson Prize for 1937*

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P O E T R Y  
A MAGAZINE OF VERSE  
VOL. LI NO. V

FEBRUARY 1938

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FIVE POEMS

CONTEMPORARY LEGEND

SEE us      Hear us  
                    The dawn falls on the mountain ledge  
and the black trees open their boughs  
                                    I saw him stumble  
the raw hands raised to his face      This was the boy  
with the white-gold hair whose father was a millionaire  
from Detroit      The story: BANK CRASH  
                                    Hear us      We have  
faced too many enemies with eyes of fear  
                                    the falling  
of the morning on the upturned faces crying with broken

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voices    salvation

The God the god the gods lost  
We must find it in something to die for  
something to live for

sending the swiftness to the heel  
firing the land

toward purpose  
the whole love meeting the long nights  
and the nights and the days

This boy whose father gave up  
the ship on the 36th floor of the Irving National  
with a cartridge in the eyeball

Listen to us now  
Surely we shall find it somewhere      Telegraph the deed  
Radiogram the message      Europe is at the crossroads  
Strike for peace

This boy beaten by the police came out of jail and walked to the workers' council signed the card joined the delegation

The ocean throws up the bodies  
of the ladies of Westbury and the men of Number 1 Wall  
They would like to sleep with the bronze-haired chest  
of the Olympic player pressed to their breasts  
and the men aching for the sweet rouged mouths

But the sea

*Willard Maas*

is cold with oblivion and the waves high with the rage  
of too many centuries

Hear us            We can find it  
The path is straight and the object to be reached for the  
                         reaching  
Night is no night and the sun explodes the farthest hills  
and we stand waiting to receive the guns  
   the typed orders  
to begin marching in columns            to turn the guns  
exchanging the whispers            the typed orders  
   while the world flares  
with rockets  
And the tall cities to be taken

..

TRANSCONTINENTAL

Avenues of traffic            the blonde from Illinois  
the gilded plaster cupids            second-run house  
  
Here the cathedral            the brass inscription BANK  
red velvet carpet            tapers            chromium rail  
  
*We must find roads to follow            the alley is blind  
and the parks at night are lonely without the music*  
  
Love was the light in the rooming house            the liquor  
made us sing            under his hand the breast

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*Rivers of the heart      breathe on      flowing  
with love under the winter-burdened sky  
We have come a long way      we are lonely  
and we have songs to sing we have forgotten*

Across Wyoming the freight car beat the tracks  
spreading newspaper on the boards they slept

*White hyacinths of April mornings sent  
to lips of burning music and the blood  
chanting the birds' sweet fortune to the air*  
*Return*

return

the hands clasped to the hands  
the figures on the wall march to the grave

They found him under the tree the pistol in his hand  
the note penciled on the back of a check

*Go write a rhyme of love and death  
The night is wide and stars for us to follow  
We have come a long way and the dark  
is spilled with purple violets and the sky  
hot with a path of fire above the street*

The bank doors close      the choir seats are empty  
Place the platform here upon the curb

*Willard Maas*

NO WORD FOR THE YOUNG

Where have we seen darkness  
Cut the light of solid day,  
The leaves fall  
And our love shaken?

The level grass in the long  
Afternoons of awakening,  
The boys following  
The paths into the woods, the girls.

Through thickened glasses  
The failing eyes survey  
The rotting fruit, the man  
Sleeping on the loading platform at midnight.

We may do them honor, the young,  
But their helpless thoughts  
Turn inward, surveying  
The fungus at the heart.

Alone, alone, crying  
When the bitterness dissolves.  
There must be answers for the morning  
And the replies not of death.

Not out of death but of action  
Erect the scaffold

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For the red neck, the bald head.  
Write the sentence on the backs of coupons.

The passing of the sick and crippled  
In the fog of the city  
To be greeted by meetings  
At the street corners and public buildings.

Burned in acid on the bronze plaque,  
Carved on the tombstones  
Our final words: *Defeat*  
*No word for the young.*

DARKNESS COMING

In the funnel of the found seashell  
The wet stars after the fog lifts

In the stiff morning the ice-hung trees  
The white backyard painted by winter

Be ever seeking in the whisper  
At the last parting and the quick handclasp

The snowfall silence and the Christmas wreath  
Return the childhood to his walking

And with his walking the soft footfall  
With his own sea-roar the bright image

*Willard Maas*

Cypress and the brown coastland  
The aching elbows of love

Holding his mouth above her own  
The breast balanced above the breasts

The heart gathering loneliness  
Sinking to sleep in remembered arms

Be seeking now for their returning  
Out of the cold mouth of December

Above the screaming of the sanded rails  
Above the subway sleeper's dreams

Before the darkness coming before the beginning  
Before the light switched on in the empty room

SONG

What will the evening tell you  
Giving the soft star to the heart?  
Of what will the night speak  
Seeing the poor walk in sadness?

Under the sound of the bridge traffic,  
The street lamp shining on the snow,  
Outstretched the hand of those  
Walking alone in the starlight.



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Evening giving the river to the eyes  
And the lonely seeing no river,  
Walk with the coming of night,  
No evening and no star to hear the story.

And the lonely and the poor remembering  
The quiet evenings after supper.  
*What will the dark tell you of love?*  
*What will the dark tell you?*

*What the night?*

*Willard Maas*

## ONE FACE

Justice  
has a  
single face  
composed  
of all  
the faces  
that brought  
a million  
actions in  
a million  
different  
cases,  
and there  
men wait  
until he  
moves and  
stonily  
embraces  
the steps  
the legal  
chain began,  
the judge's  
step retraces.  
Justice  
has a

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

nodding  
head and  
little in  
its voices,  
and something  
in my  
conscience  
stirs and  
nothing there  
rejoices,  
for when I  
hear "Not  
guilty, sir,"  
or "Guilty!"  
or "Who's next?"  
I know  
that I'm  
the villain,  
not the  
hero of  
the text.

And yet  
some other  
fellow's down  
for what  
I might have  
done,

*Alfred Kreymborg*

and still  
that other  
fellow's dark  
while I  
am in the  
sun,  
and thus  
will other  
fellows go,  
bedevilled  
by the race  
that never  
seems to  
see itself  
in every  
human  
face.

*Alfred Kreymborg*

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EMBRACED BY HOLY ARMS

Embraced by holy arms  
With veins that cool her sides  
And half embraced by legs  
Upon the holy tides,

Her body touches and  
Arranges sacredly  
The plants of seaweed on  
The marble in the sea.

While attar chills them both  
His knee upon her slips.  
His breath repeats her breath  
All lighted and their lips

Create their godlike cries  
Near seaweed's roots. The sea's  
Cascades and waves encase  
The waves about their knees.

*Louis Second*

## DIDACTIC POEM

Walls of the senses separate  
Man from man from the world, create  
The blindness of the single reign.  
Walls of love are walls of hate,  
Holding close, but shutting out;  
Fighting for our own, we flout  
Humanity, and count it gain.

Occasional saviors tender rest  
To all the wearied and oppressed,  
And preach the brotherhood of man:  
"Alone you fail, but you are blest  
Before your Father's altar, son."  
Yet love alone has never won  
Uncruel life since life began.

Now love is aided; only now  
The pledge accompanies the vow;  
"To Live" rules out "To Isolate":  
Our mercenary skills allow  
A social need to buy and sell.  
Annihilation after hell,  
The price we pay to separate.

*Robertson Sillars*

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DEATH OF LEAH

Leah sang <sup>\*</sup>ugly cinquains to the moon:  
Birthdays were fewer now — she had a knack  
Of using dyes to keep the gray hairs back  
And daring styles that only the young assume.

She drank too much: she who had swelled with scorn  
When we grew sottish, sprawling on her rugs  
In empty glee to tempt her with our hugs  
And puppy passion. (She was apt to mourn

Those moments now.) Leah gave up her flat  
And travelled in the ludicrous belief  
Of romance on some moonbathed coral reef  
Or dusky mountain love on Ararat.

We were still roistering when she returned:  
Leah had changed, Leah talked much of death;  
Her mountain climb had left her short of breath.  
(No dyes on Ararat! — she had been spurned

By guide and porter.) Leah began to think  
Of convents where the too-adventurous heart  
Might flutter unperceived and ache apart  
From all desire evoked by constant drink.

*William FitzGerald*

We were still guzzling when she died:  
The spirit drooped, the grim wit slept.  
Sterile the tryst her soul had kept  
With abstinence on heaven's side.

She shall be borne by twelve white mice  
To her eternal resting-place.  
Skilled hands shall pacify that face  
Whose counterpart is found in ice.

While we, the distraught revellers, shall consign  
Her memory to dust ; as we deposit  
Some baleful family portrait in the closet  
There to discolor in the cramp of time.

*William FitzGerald*



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FOUR POEMS

NIGHT LETTER TO A MAN LOST IN MID-OCEAN

My friend, you are well-dead in sluttish times.  
Earth has lost her rudder and drifts toward shoals  
of desperation. Shipmates stand with knives  
against each other's breast. Unplotted tombs  
await the dossils of these suppurate souls.  
Ashore for flotsam lurk conniving knaves

who have already got your core and mine.  
Honor has rotted among the guts of hope.  
Shall we not mutiny and be one man  
to garrote traitors with a halyard-rope?

I write you as we drift . . . perhaps myself  
shall beat delivery of a post too late,  
and I shall glide, a-swirl in phosphor-light,  
to your pelagic urn on the coral shelf.

BY A PATRIOT'S GRAVE

Here lies a great heart seeping in the soil  
of her he loved more fiercely than his life:  
the land his personal penance would assoil.  
Here is the cornerstone for new belief

*C. F. MacIntyre*

where we must hack our oath : strongly to follow  
a quarry not in view but which his horn  
once started fleeing down fields too long fallow,  
in easier days when we were not yet born.

Stark is the enterprise, the failure stern,  
and wager leaves us rearward of his mark.  
So, holier now the duty in this murk

whose need is martyrs' bred of his stout strain.  
Grip hands and dedicate to him this work :  
red hecatombs before the whirlwind strewn.

SINCERELY NOT ARTESIAN

Under the dry land in its sleep  
the song of water glides on feet of thieves,  
rises in silver, generous to slap  
briskly the chines of the drouth-beaten beeves,  
and with meniscus pinch the pool's baked lips :

mirror gleaming green with mirage-corn  
and chaparral where flanks rub off shrewd flies,  
where the last Indian rots by the stone quern,  
and on raptorial compass-arcs for flaws  
wide vultures scan, or still as urns on cairns

solicitously regard the starving calves  
and whet beaks sharp as a committee's greed . . .

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tucked coolly, safely, leaden water laughs  
and gravidly seeps down the easier grade,  
forcing new sap in the ferns' fossil leaves.

"REVENGE IS NOT A FOOD TO BE EATEN HOT"

*René Maran*

Revenge is not a food to be eaten hot.  
Cool it a generation, even two.  
Sniff at it, fan it softly with your hat;  
but give the coals a bit of poking too.

However, in this case we wait too long.  
Pus works in a wound that must be trimmed and cleaned.  
We are a hydra-headed monster, strong  
but aimless, and our eyes of hate grow blind.

Revenge is not a food to be eaten cold.  
Let us chop some of the heads off, be one thing  
before our anger starves and dies of mold.

Our very patience proves this wrath broods deep.  
Shall we be one: one mind, a multiple king?  
Or shall we sulk and rot and fall asleep?

*C. F. MacIntyre*

## TWO POEMS

### TOWER

These moles of upper air, the ghosted tenants  
Of this thin place  
Hear nothing of the silver scattered  
On rat's warren, spider's lace.

The air shakes, uninvaded  
They curl their paws  
Closer for warmth; the wave ebbs,  
Withdraws.

Few wake to hear,  
Detecting rust  
On tongue and clapper; the hands atug at the rope  
Are scarcely more than dust.

### OLD BOOKS

Sappho's dark hyacinth,  
Prospero with his rod,  
Achilles in his tent,  
Saint Francis praising God:

Hold fast, hold fast to these,  
The sturdy and the few  
That are more lovely than your love,  
More actual than you.

*Lindley Williams Hubbell*

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THE MIND HAS STUDIED FLIGHT

Against the sky a seabird's breast of cloud,  
Against the cloud a true gull and his curve.  
Against the rock a tress of kelp and loud  
Among the crevices the pulse and nerve  
Of a sea quickening to moon and wind.  
Here by the sea the trouble in the heart  
Matches the unequal trouble of the mind —  
Judgment and joy at war and far apart.  
Down swoops the strong, spray-coloured, sea-soft bird  
Upon his fish, without "ought not," or "ought."  
Man, flightless master of the flying word  
Follows his every act with afterthought.  
And yet a man, whose conscience is his wing  
And must be tilted to the carrying air  
Of that sphere marked for wit's inhabiting,  
Looks at the gulls and knows what keeps them there.

Thought, like a bird, is mannerless and swift  
To snatch for substance at the hollow tide  
Where those effects and promised actions drift  
Which keep the fed thing on the living side.  
Balanced within its element, the mind  
Has studied flight. Even to the carrion gull  
It is akin, even to his crying kind.  
Now the mind's man, in this cool evening's lull

*Raymond Holden*

Of wind and light looks out to sea and hears  
The sheaves of water shifting on the rock,  
The seabird's wailing waving at his ears,  
The heartbeat in his side saying "knock," saying "knock."

*Raymond Holden*

### FROM WITHOUT THE FENCE

Yes, I have loved them  
And still love them.  
Yet hesitating on the soft warm carpet  
Within the formal hall,  
My lips conceal the eagerness of going,  
My toes move murderous in their shoes.

And I am like a colt,  
Long held beside his mother's placid flank,  
His belly over-filled  
With too smooth bitten pasture grass.

When the mare turns  
He hurtles through the narrow lane  
To hillsides rank with bloom and poison weed  
And brawny oak  
Driving their hard and amorous roots  
Through sandy soil.

*Carleton Winston*

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TWO POEMS

IN A DISTANT SUBURB

Child whose breathing fans the dark  
Like swallows' commerce in a shadowy barn,  
My hands that stretch your sheet, divine  
The smallness that's your ornament.  
Night has delivered you of things not yours,  
But all the bracelets of your fine dimensions  
Are fresh around you as chains of savage grass.

The daydream of your schooling is unlaced,  
Your breastbone naked of its heavy song.  
Dream of the tawny city streets, where run  
Cats that are great with young.  
Through the grey crowded evening  
The negress calls her children home,  
The legless man plays on his violin ;

The sultry pollen of the factory thickens,  
The giant whistles mourn :  
Dream of the lilac and the watermill,  
The barren orchard Sunday fills with lovers,  
This rented farm with neither cows nor corn ;

Dream that you move  
By the voluminous Hudson that enlarges  
With marching lakes the night of villas and trains,

*Anne Channing*

And in the mirror of your dream, decipher  
Our deadly exploitations and our love.

THAT IS SHE

That is she, the wandering queen,  
Grief that's larger than our own.  
In the old days, she had been  
Distant on her changing throne.  
Standing now among the crowd  
Her great image represents  
All the murmur, choked or loud,  
Of struggle without recompense.

Take from her the murdered son,  
Or the daughter drowned in shade;  
Clothed or bare, she is the one  
Whose titanic sorrow made  
Little our full-statured pain.  
Without legend, praise or crown  
Looks her steady face again  
From three quarters of the town.

*Anne Channing*



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FIVE POEMS

INVITATION TO THE DANCE

Shall we not walk together over the city's stone  
Homeless beneath the cliffs of steel,  
Our spirit lighter than birds  
Welcomed in crannies of far-flung cornices?  
Shall we not walk together  
And rise into that dream we know?

Rest beside me on the stone;  
Rest, for when we can no longer walk  
We must dance.

Streets have ended far below,  
City sparrows sleep in their smoky towers.  
Here all space borrows your light  
And floats like an orchid quivering:  
This is your theatre and mine.  
Raise your arms to sow movement like a seed,  
And in the cluster of your hand  
Let me see our dream unfold.

DARK BANQUET

I know a rocky world  
Where night leans down with flowing breasts,  
And every man, woman, and child

*Mark Turbyfill*

That roams therein is nursed.  
Secrets blinded by the sun  
Regain their sight, and each dim creature  
Peers with the eyes of a hawk.  
Over the crags and through the crevices  
They crawl on night-born feet,  
Sure with determination's balance.  
Inspired by the tongues of the intuitive sea  
They speak a dark language withheld by day,  
And in the clear obscurity of stony shores  
Where class distinctions, like shadows, fade,  
The hungry are fed, the well-filled divide their store.

When dawn raises its golden head,  
And birds sing purely,  
That rocky world, of night bereft,  
Lies ravaged by light, by rats, and shrill with gulls.  
Hunger mounts amid the ruins.

PORTAIT IMPRESSION

Am I then your estranged creator,  
O fugitive image,  
Sprung from my parturient hand?  
  
Yet unilluminated in the wilderness,  
I burned to touch you with my eyes.  
With vision I encompassed you,  
And colored you with imagination.

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I laid your head against cerulean blue;  
Made your lashes long, your eyes to dream;  
Tinted your lips faintly to smile.  
I stroked your breast with gold.  
My hand trembled  
Like a chrysalis ready to burst.

I saw you rise,  
Delicate mirage,  
Above the wilderness  
And depart.

THE POET

When he looks through the air of the world,  
And his glance, like a blade, tills the wordy soil,  
Trillions of seeds with their secret stems  
Fly in lines of light —  
Universe of speech not yet spoken,  
Words planted deep in the ether,  
Each one knows its name.

Universe of words, he sings you a song;  
Out of your own substance he sings:  
He is a word planted in you from the beginning.

Universe of speech,  
Bright ether through which the hard stars swim,

*Mark Turbyfill*

Vast shell of nothing,  
Too frail to refuse entrance to sighs,  
You are yet more solid than earth.

He steps upon you as upon the ground ;  
He breathes you in,  
O universe of speech.

DANCE AND TRANSFIGURATION

In the dead of night in spring  
The Illinois Emergency Relief  
Whined among the tree-tops,  
Arranged a choreography of grief.

The social worker shuddered  
And made the window fast  
Against the leafless waltzing in the blast.

Blessed be his name  
Who recognized the Dance Renascent,  
And saw it stoop amidst the barren *mise en scene*  
To plant in cardinal positions  
The feet of as many as understood.

*Mark Turbyfill*

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### REVIEWS

#### SECOND READING

*Selected Poems*, by Allen Tate. Scribner's.

IN THE current issue of the *Virginia Quarterly Review* (Winter, 1938) Allen Tate clarifies the statement with which the preface to his *Selected Poems* ends. In an article on his *Ode to the Confederate Dead*, the author points out the difference between feeling and experience, between knowledge "about" something and the knowledge as the thing itself. "In a manner of speaking," he writes, "the poem is its own knower, neither poet nor reader knowing anything that the poet says apart from the words of the poem." It is thus possible to learn more completely than before just where Mr. Tate stands, though the same principles have been set down at greater length in other of his writings, in the *Reactionary Essays*, and in some of the uncollected criticism.

Tate has been, and to a lesser extent still is, the most highly praised poet of his generation with the exception of Hart Crane. It is true that more recently he has had his share of condemnation, not only from the Left, but rather surprisingly, from what one would suppose to be congenial quarters. The preface to this book is partly at fault; the incomplete fulfillment of the promise of *Poems 1928-1931*, in the volume called *The Mediterranean*, especially in politics, has had its influence as well. The relatively large amount of excellence in the *Poems* proved somewhat mis-

## Second Reading

leading, and when *The Mediterranean* exhibited a number of failures, the obvious reaction was that Tate had already shot his bolt some years before. It has been pointed out by Cudworth Flint that there has not been much change in the poetry over a period of time (*The Southern Review*, Winter, 1936); in the same article Flint has made clear, as well as anyone, the particular problems and achievements of the poet.

Seeing the final selection of what Tate cares to retain from his three previous books, the critic is faced with a problem almost as difficult as that which the author has set up for himself. Tate has never been a prolific poet, and the ideals which he has held have always been rigorous in the extreme. The *Selected Poems* runs to a little over a hundred pages, not a large volume by any means. The relative distinction of the work is flattering. The poems are difficult, partly because of the great amount of specialized knowledge they contain, partly because of the language in which they are cast, though the first of these difficulties is not uncommon in much contemporary poetry. There are inevitably overtones to the poems, but the aim of the writer has been to make each poem its "own knower." This is a high aim, and one which would prove disastrous for any poet to be completely subject to. One of the saving graces for Tate is that he has given in to some of his imperfections, letting them stand as they are; the *Ode to the Confederate Dead* is an excellent example; and the *Sonnets of the Blood* which are almost entirely new in the *Selected Poems*, may

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serve as an illustration of some of the dangers of too vigorous re-writing. In the present version they have lost, it seems to me, much of the brisk movement which was necessary for their effectiveness. (In any case, they are not, as Yvor Winters once somewhat carelessly, if learnedly, pointed out, "the most abominably written series of sonnets this side of Barnabe Barnes.")

If then, there is little development, if the same faults which dogged Tate through *Mr. Pope* still dog him, and if he has not seemed to resolve much of his work to the perfection which he desires, what remains? First of all, and most important, some very fine poems in which the demands of the author have been met or nearly met, and a probity of mind which is rare enough in any writer. One may deplore the lack of "physicality," as Kenneth Burke has rather loosely stated it; one may object to what politics are apparent; but one cannot overlook the meditations on the basic problems of life and death, even though he may disagree with some of the conclusions which Tate draws. Mortality is Tate's chief subject — not the past, as so many would have it — and mortality is important, and will be, even after a revolution has been accomplished. When, in *The Oath*, he writes:

Then Lytle asked: Who are the dead?

Who are the living and the dead? . . .

. . . . .

I thought I heard the dark pounding its head

On a rock crying: *Who are the dead?*

Then Lytle turned with an oath — By God, it's true!

## Second Reading

he is not thinking in universals, he is thinking of himself. In the preface he writes, "The poet as seer who experiences life in behalf of the population is a picture that is not clear in my mind, but it is an interesting picture; it happens to be one with which I have no sympathy at all." This may, perhaps, be old-fashioned. Emerson's idea of the poet seems to be returning in full regalia.

Nevertheless, Tate includes here his long argumentative poems, *Fragment of a Meditation* and *Causerie*, and some of the shorter ones, *Aeneas at Washington*, *The Meaning of Life*, *To the Lacedemonians*, and others, almost in contradiction to his statement. But he is worth listening to, and worth attention. Prejudice is the demon that upsets the applecart, and not mere superstition. It is every man's fault. And in spite of prejudice, Tate is the author of *The Mediterranean*, *The Cross*, *The Twelve*, *Emblems*, *The Subway*, *Mother and Son*, *Sonnets at Christmas*, *Shadow and Shade*, *Pastoral*, *The Ode to the Confederate Dead*, and *The Eagle*, with a number of other fine passages. This is more than adequate return for his labor. In *Ditty* he writes:

Men will plunge, mile after mile of men,  
To crush this lucent madness of the face,  
Go home and put their heads upon the pillow,  
Turn with whatever shift the darkness cleaves,  
Tuck in their eyes, and cover  
The flying dark with sleep like falling leaves.

This is not the peace that passes understanding. Melville said, "The only true infidelity is for a live man to declare



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himself dead." Tate has been accused of the infidelity, but if one recalls *The Wolves*, the accusation fails.

*Samuel French Morse*

### IN A GREEN SHADE

"Annihilating all that's made  
To a green thought in a green shade."

*Marvell*

*Cold Morning Sky*, by Marya Zaturenska. Macmillan.

Marya Zaturenska's talent is of such high level, her poems in *Cold Morning Sky* of such "authentic fleece," that to admit the glory seems, at first, enough. In this, her second book, she is buoyed up on a sea of sources — Spencer, Keats, Thomas Nashe and the more lyrical Milton; but she is always the individual swimmer who has plunged, by choice, into a poetic holiday's release. Her criterion of what to learn and use has been "pure poetry," the musical line and image before all else. There is nothing of the sharp, stripped, dramatic shape of Housman or Hardy, nothing of the unique, individual anguish of Emily Dickinson. She seeks the mellifluous line with restraint, and achieves her poetic release with striking success, conscious always of what she is doing, knowing it is dangerous and unfashionable and temporary. From the squawk of cities and the gnawing of the modern mind, she escapes to asylum and takes the veil. The gesture is sincere and authentic enough, and very beautifully done, but it is sad as all such denials must be.

For *Cold Morning Sky* is a denial, and its magic is the

*In a Green Shade*

fantasy of *Lunar Tides*, the romantic yearning for impossible innocence, for the myth of Greece, for Gothic mystery. Almost all the tags of shame the late Irving Babbitt attached to romantic verse and to the romantic attitude can be applied to Miss Zaturenska's gestured escape. Is this the answer to the modern poet's problem of adjusting his inevitable individualism and self-consciousness to modern science and social consciousness? There is a beauty of reason and of fact and of still-existing human nature that Miss Zaturenska renounces in this book. Perhaps a good, stiff, imaginative course in chemistry, or a blasphemous re-reading of Jeans or Eddington, or a close friend who thinks poetry has its limitations, would help to set Marya Zaturenska on her feet and out into the world again. Then let her keep on singing, for whatever she sings must be worth listening to.

“— oh, heart, beware  
The unearthly bliss, the lunar light  
The phantom on the burning stair.”

*Marshall Schacht*

HARVARD HAS IT

*A Letter to Robert Frost*, by Robert Hillyer. Alfred A. Knopf.

*Saltwater Farm*, by Robert P. Tristram Coffin. Macmillan.

That rare person, the serious reader of poetry, may legitimately expect of experienced writers at least a minimum of care in craft, a fairly well-developed point of view from which to inspect society and the men who compose it, a

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character sufficiently mature to be free of such vulgarities as smugness, self-complacency, and sentimentality, and an imagination disciplined by tradition, compelled by the predicaments of contemporary life, projected by good will and wonder into the astonishing future. Measured against these none too austere standards, the present books of Robert Hillyer and Robert P. Tristram Coffin fail.

Though Mr. Hillyer is of the two the more cultivated and the more accomplished craftsman, neither of these poets achieves a level much higher than that on which the beginner strives. Indeed, no more drilling an exercise in tedium has been produced in many a day than this collection of blank-verse letters that Mr. Hillyer for obscure reasons has seen fit to give us. Reminiscent in tone of the small-town advice-giving editorial, they exhibit embarrassingly a mind that is so far uncertain of its own merit that it must deal in thinly veiled wisecracks against its superiors in both artistic and spiritual spheres:

In short, I note the vogue no longer smiles  
On one un-Briton in the British Isles;  
Nor heeds from Italy that "wandering voice"  
Whose absence should make Idaho rejoice.

Garrulous and glib, in lines remarkable mainly for the deadening boredom of their rhythms and the triteness of their rhymes, Mr. Hillyer manages only to butter thin feelings over a space so wide that it quite absorbs whatever served as motive for his verses. Mr. Hillyer's winning qualities are humaneness, gentility, moderation, and a brand of humor

that amounts to nothing more than innocuous irony — that instrument the “brighter spirits” in the school-teaching profession use against a world they so much fear. His outrageous qualities are self-righteousness, smug self-satisfaction, and a fundamental intolerance of disagreement. It is therefore apparent that this poet’s vying qualities cancel each other, and if there is anything left at all, Harvard has it.

For the unrestrainedly pat, for machine-like regularity in uninspired loquacity, Mr. Robert P. Tristram Coffin has no competitors. Search as he will, the reader cannot find on any page of *Saltwater Farm* a completed poem. Fragments of pretty scenery, conventionalized characterizations, sentimentalized metaphor, a drouth of passion, a scarcity of insight, are alone discoverable. All the mistakes a beginner is warned against are here — lines padded to fill out the meter and to meet the rhyme; the afflatus, the expanded image traveling on a line of vague feeling to a gaseous end; ignorance of the limits which the physical universe imposes on the fanciful; poetic posing, ingenuity mistaken for imagination, mere words substituted for ideas. As does Mr. Hill-ier, Mr. Coffin exhibits a self-complacency that renders him valueless as a commentator on human joy and suffering. A man so thoroughly satisfied with the *status quo* can give the hurt, the poor, the insatiable, and the honestly curious little more than sickly pity and platitudinous Pollyannaism.

To demonstrate Mr. Coffin’s aptitude as a versifier, one need only quote the two following excerpts — the first as an example of imprecision of fancy; the second as an example

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of the inferior quality of Mr. Coffin's ear even when he deals with the New England speech he is supposed to know so well:

Cows in a pasture faded into bells.

and

You use your body, not your head,  
When you have a boat's keel spread  
Out before you to put right.  
It is a kind of a delight  
That needs no words to make it go, *etc.*

Both Mr. Hillyer and Mr. Coffin have been awarded the Pulitzer Prize for poetry. Of the first, one must say that he has proceeded with care and a certain dignity; but of the second we can only paraphrase Francis Jeffrey and affirm that Mr. Coffin has dashed his Hippocrene with too large an infusion of saltwater. *C. A. Millspaugh*

### SIGN OF CAPRICORNUS

*Sign of Capricornus*, by Kathryn Worth. Alfred A. Knopf.

I find in this collection of poems by Kathryn Worth an alert and eager mind, sensitive, appreciative; a healthy mind, yet not unaware of the tragic situation in which, as human beings, we daily move. These qualities come through definitely, even in the least successful of the poems. Yet the tragic awareness, while present, is not the pervading tone of the book; there is not the sense, for example, of the bitter drama which one finds in Miss Bogan's work, or the inescapable despair which one finds in that of Mr. Eliot.

### *Sign of Capricornus*

The sense of interest is uppermost. "Plenish your granaries with wonder," she writes to the small child for whom and concerning whom the central portion of the book is written.

It is this second section of the book which pleases me most and contains almost all of the poems which I should like to quote, the more perfect poems in which the poet's various experiments have not taken precedence over or interfered with the proper business of the poem. This is the fifth poem in a sequence entitled *Child in the Seasons*:

Now is the seed of long and fierce disaster  
Sown in the sod. Now does the laughing worm  
Uplift his head to contemplate how faster  
Than any light, than any root more firm,  
The acres of the world prepare for him.

Here is the table laid for death, whose garden  
We walk upon, child with the hands outspread,  
Child of the flesh whereof I am the warden;  
I walk, inclining toward your costly head,  
By no pale talk of morning comforted.

It seems to me that the last stanza is unusually fine. The same theme, with variations, is exemplified in many of the other poems, in *To a Child Watching Spring*, in the last section of *Parables at Four*; and in *Child in the Centuries* we have it combined with the other dominant theme of this group, that of the awakening of a child to consciousness, first sensory, and then spiritual. These, with the *Presentation with the Book*, *Annus Primus*, *Written on a Child's First Flyleaf*, *Exorcism*, *Immaculate with Silence*, show Miss Worth at her best.

When she is not at her best, her difficulties would seem

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to arise from her virtues, from a too great metric facility which at times tends to make her seem glib when the subject is serious, and from her preoccupation with scientific terms and images. There is no reason why poetry should not be written on scientific subjects; and it has been written. The difficulty in Miss Worth's case, as I see it, is that she has not, in certain poems, written about the scientific subject, but has used the images of science much as she might have used the images of the Petrarchan tradition, applying them to situations between human beings as old as love — and that in so doing she has achieved an effect fully as "literary" as if she had stuck to the old tradition. The interest in the terms and images has superseded the interest in the true substance of the poem. Most of the poems in the first section suffer in this way.

I remember once hearing Mr. Padraic Colum discuss, and object to, the use of the phrase "a cosmic viewpoint" in a poem. He said that a word, or a phrase, needed to be humanized before it could be used successfully in a poem, that it needed to be around cottage fires and to acquire, as it were, the smell of the smoke from the burning turf. And recently I found in the preface to *A Trophy of Arms*, by Ruth Pitter, these sentences by Mr. James Stephens: "In prose, a word must be of the most direct, unequivocal meaning: in verse a word carries all its philology on its back, and a thousand years of significance. Prose perishes without new words. Poetry cannot abide these, nor use them."

Miss Worth evidently feels that poetry does need new

words and that it can use them, and she has set out gallantly to do something about it. Nevertheless, she often handicaps herself thereby. When she writes of a child's first experience with sound:

Her incus feels the cricket  
Make tumult in the grass,  
But not within the labyrinth  
Translation comes to pass,

surely the word *incus* is more of a liability to the stanza than an asset. The sound, the implications, everything except the prose meaning of the word are wrong for the place in which it occurs. It would be better poetry in translation—"the little anvil bone"—although that would hardly help in the immediate difficulty. Just how many generations of sitting around peat fires would be needed to humanize *incus* I do not know, but I am afraid it would be a good many.

*Janet Lewis*

#### WHAT CAN BE TAUGHT

*Workers in Fire: A Book About Poetry*, by Margery Mansfield. Longmans, Green & Co.

One-half of any art is the artist's own; the other half is capable of being taught. Poets have been the most reluctant of all to share their technical secrets with apprentices. Since the beginning of culture there have been schools of music and the dance, of painting and statuary; but aside from an occasional critical treatise or philosophical analysis, little attempt has been made to teach the writing of poetry, and



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that not by practicing professionals. One cause, perhaps, lies in the tools of the trade. The Renaissance artists had colors to grind, canvases to scrape, studio floors to sweep; the humble aspirant could make himself useful to the master he attended. Devotees of the dance know the need of an ensemble against which they may shine, and the sculptor likes to delegate the final polishing and routine to a less gifted workman. But a poet has no drudgery he can assign to others. No one can help him make a poem, and he is often harmed by emulators who make his best phrases too common by repetition.

Yet there are many serious students of poetic technique who deserve good text-books and competent assistance and have been able to get neither. For these, *Workers in Fire* should satisfy a real need. They may use it as a reference book or read it for pleasure, or they may give themselves an entire course in the fundamentals of poetry-writing by looking up and studying the allusions in the text as they go along. For the finished poet, the book will hold little that is new, but he may feel a pleasant surprise in seeing expounded much that he has discovered for himself. The chapters on rhythm and meter, form, imagery, power and rhyme are especially valuable for beginners. The section on the Hopkins scansion, sprung meter and the new rhythms is of wider and more advanced interest. It might even be dangerous to the progress of some amateurs, though not to any worth their salt. The talented student feels his rhythms as he feels his emotions and varies them according to his taste to fit the content of

the poem. The humdrum or mediocre student will often try to use his lessons in prosody as his main tool. When he fails to produce literature, he is aggrieved. He has done his part, and somehow the rules must be wrong. What can he do now?

The answer to this question was once given by a famous British academician: "Without the tension of that exalted mood into which every true poet rises, not a single line of true poetry was ever written." And here we arrive at the much-abused theme of "inspiration." That is the half of poetry which cannot be put down in any text. It is, above all else, personal and untransmittable, and though it partakes of the psychologically unexplored and not of the supernatural, it remains a mystery to the end. Somehow the relationship between conscious and unconscious is so quickened that associations pass through with lightning-like rapidity. A phrase leaps into being full-grown with no sensible effort on the part of the poet. Around that, he more or less consciously builds his structure with the help of further associational flashes and his own knowledge of emotional effect. But to achieve the "exalted mood" is of major importance.

All such objections and exceptions are carefully noted by Miss Mansfield, but her book is primarily concerned with the other half of the art. It is written for beginners and those who are unsure. The reading of poetry aloud she holds to be necessary to the production of a vital art: "The next time a friend says: 'I hope I shall see your work'—take him up. Answer, 'Here is a short one which I wrote recently,' or 'Here is a little one about —' and talk to him

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naturally." (Such advice might well be included in a book on how to alienate one's friends. The muffled groans of well-intentioned victims resound throughout literary history. Tennyson, on the slightest pretext, responded with a recital of *Maud* from which there was no escape. And more recent parallels are too fresh in every mind.)

The only other chapter to which serious rebuttal can be made is that entitled *The Expressiveness of Words*. Here one sees an effort to evolve a science from nothing:

We find long *i* used in words that express height or idealism or things associated with them: height, sky, light (which comes from the sky) sight (made possible by light) night (absence of light) blind (inability to see the light) time (measured by heavenly bodies) climate (influenced by positions of heavenly bodies) kite (the flying toy) fly and climb (upward movements) dive (through the air) and certain words in the moral sphere which have the suggestion of upward effort, try, strive, right, pride, ideal.

It requires no study of philology to deduce that *nacht* and *nox* have the same connotation as *night*, that *licht* and *lux* are substitutes for *light*, that *time* has been both *tempus* and *temps* without changing its relation to the heavenly bodies. And how about the upward movements of *slime*, *crime*, *fright*, *cyanide* and *lice*?

Somewhere in the mysterious depths of our language lies a cause-and-effect link between word-sounds and emotion. But we must look for it in the sounds, not the meaning, of words. "The thin silver horn of the wind" produces its effect with short *i* and *n*, not with any verbal ideology.

J. N. N.

LONDON LETTER

*Christmas Day, 1937*

OUTSIDE the window at which I am now writing are the grimy façades of Devonshire Street, Holborn, where in 1913 Harold Monro opened the internationally famous Poetry Bookshop. "He chose," we are told, "to place this centre in a slum because he thought that by doing so he was bringing poetry to the people; but the people cared nothing for his poetry and the acquaintances he made in Devonshire Street merely regarded him as a possible source of free drinks after the public houses had closed." Monro died in 1932; his shop, which had never paid, and which had by that time been moved to more elegant quarters near the British Museum, carried on for a little while and was closed in 1935.

The Poetry Bookshop is symbolical. Poetry is merely tolerated in England, this most philistine of all countries, as an eccentricity of otherwise respectable citizens. The poet regarded as a possible source of free drinks is an ironic conception! But nowadays there are no poets; or if a man writes verse he takes good care not to advertise the fact outside a small circle of intellectuals; most poets become wage-earners, for rent and bread. As one of our younger critics, Julian Symons, has said: "The conditions of life today are very disturbing for an artist; because most of the people who write books and paint pictures are not artists at all or artists only over the week-end or artists after 11 o'clock at night when the pubs shut, nobody worries much

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about this." No doubt this is more or less the case in all lands, but in England a similar scheme to that of the Academy of American Poets advertised in recent numbers of POETRY, for example, would be inconceivable. The common people have no idea at all of the nature of poetry, there is no means of communication between them and the poet, except through indirect and vitiating intermediaries. High-brow novelists may read poetry, middlebrow novelists admire the highbrows' novels, lowbrow novelists read the productions of the middlebrow and the public takes its choice from among these three classes of writers. Volumes of verse by distinguished poets usually sell around 300 copies, though popular successes like Auden, Spender, Day-Lewis no doubt sell more. For a publisher to bring out a book of poems is more or less a charitable act, and he usually expects at least a novel from the author for his pains.

What is the extent of the English market for poetry, and how do poets exist in this country? It goes without saying no one can live on money earned by writing verse; nor is there any private or public patronage to speak of. If a poet wishes to live by the pen he must write criticism, stories or novels, review books, and all this means being half a writer, half a publicist, a hanger-on, frequently, of literary cliques, a party-goer.

Most literary men, owing to circumstances, are of the upper and middle classes, sometimes possessors of private means (and frequently communists or at least "leftish"), and it is these persons who, with their private influence,

secure privileged positions on the business and executive side of the literary scene. The working class is *not* literate. Frequently the best creative writers emerge from the lower-middle class, which is composed mainly of shopkeepers, clerks, etc. Although this may be difficult for American readers to grasp, socially their background is different from that of public-school and university educated writers, who can never undo the knots of the old school tie, and there is little contact. But this is never talked about.

There are three or four monied literary periodicals in London, papers that pay from one to three guineas for a poem. There is the *Listener*, cultural organ of the British Broadcasting Corporation; the *Spectator*, the famous Liberal weekly; the *New Statesman*, a popular and substantial Labour weekly, published from the same office as the dignified monthly *London Mercury*, and the flamboyant and bulky *Life & Letters Today*, a black sheep among its fellows, in wolves' clothing. Sometimes these papers print excellent poems, it is true, but as a rule, when they are not presenting the work of well-known and therefore "safe" poets, it is quite impossible to see by what standards of criticism they assess the poems which they publish. The admirable *Calendar* of ten years ago is deceased; though we still have Mr. Eliot's *Criterion*. And for the most part a good poet must expect his poems to appear in the more exclusive literary journals and the poetry magazines, where payment is nominal or nothing. The *market* in London is in a deplorable state.

## POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

There is a King's Medal for poetry, presented each year by a committee consisting of the present Poet Laureate, and Messrs. I. A. Richards, Laurence Binyon, Walter de la Mare and Gilbert Murray, to a poet under the age of thirty who has published not more than two volumes of verse. In 1934 the medal was presented to Mr. Laurence Whistler. In 1935 this chorus of old men stated that in its opinion there was no young poet writing at that time who was worthy of its notice. This year (1937) Mr. W. H. Auden was the recipient. It is a handsome medal and carries some prestige with it, but no money. Its prestige will be enhanced since this last decision.

An eccentric gentleman known as Victor B. Neuberg ran, for a year or two, a "Poets' Corner" in one of our weekly mass newspapers, *The Sunday Referee*. This venture was concluded in 1935, after the editor had distributed many undeserved half-guineas and minor prizes in the form of wallets, cigarette-cases, and powder-puffs. However, he had the distinction of publishing the first volume of Mr. Dylan Thomas, the *18 Poems*.

The literati in London are becoming more and more "Left." *New Writing*, a half-yearly volume edited by Mr. John Lehmann, is the best of the communist literary publications. Spender and Auden are the star turns, and a high level of writing is maintained. *New Verse*, an up-to-date sixpenny periodical started in 1933, is still going strong, and six numbers of a lively new twice-quarterly, *Twentieth Century Verse*, have appeared. A young poet, Keidrych

Rhys, has gathered together some brilliant Welsh writers in *Wales*, edited at a Carmarthenshire farm. *Programme*, a thin pamphlet which appears irregularly from Oxford, deserves attention, if you can secure a copy. Produced by undergraduates, it holds the record for editorial changes. Two journalists produce an annual anthology, *The Year's Poetry*, a "representative selection" of the past year's production of verse, for semi-popular consumption. Half guineas are distributed. There are numbers of other periodicals which print occasional verse, but desultorily, and/or without payment.

So much for the more mundane part of my letter, which is indeed mundane. But there is something to rejoice about in the state of poetry today in this country, even if the material conditions are not too favorable for the serious writer. I cannot speak with authority, but it seems to me that England is enjoying a poetic flourishing which has seldom been seen before. Apart from the two big guns whom everybody knows, and who may rightly be claimed by America (and Yeats by Ireland), England today is blessed with the presence of several mature poets writing with authority and power, notably Robert Graves, Louis Macneice, Stephen Spender, Ronald Bottrall, and W. H. Auden, as well as younger men who have not yet reached the stage of being "accepted writers," like Dylan Thomas and George Barker.

At the end of 1935 Mr. David Gascoyne (born 1916) published his *Short Survey of Surrealism*, the first book on that subject by a British writer. Previously some of Gascoyne's own surrealist poems and translations had appeared



## POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

in *New Verse*, and now the surrealist movement seemed to have secured a firm footing in England. This impression was intensified by the success of the Surrealist Exhibition at the Burlington Galleries, sponsored by Gascoyne, André Breton, Paul Eluard, and other prominent surrealists. Other books on surrealism appeared; Herbert Read, Charles Madge, Hugh Sykes Davies declared sympathy with the movement, and a Surrealist Group existed for a time in Bloomsbury, though I think it has now collapsed. The Parton Press produced Gascoyne's poems under the title: *Man's Life is This Meat*, sensitive and delicate dreamlike verses, with the usual undercurrent of ennui and disintegration:

The red dew of autumn clings to winter's curtains  
And when the curtain rises the landscape is as empty as a board  
Empty except for a broken bottle and a torso broken like a bottle  
And when the curtain falls the palace of cards will fall  
The card-castle on the table will topple without a sound

and so forth. It was about this time that Roger Roughton founded the recently deceased *Contemporary Poetry and Prose*, which was largely devoted to surrealist work.

The effect of surrealism was to make certain poets write with less reference to the intellect than they might otherwise have given. In some cases this led to a sort of semi-surrealism, as in the poems of Kenneth Allott, "journalistic" spinning out of feeling and imagination into words. One is reminded of Picasso and Hindemith in other arts. Such poems, though often vivid and impressive, lack intensity and compression; their movement is peripheral, and one feels that they end only because the poet has spent his wind.

Though I may be unsympathetic, this seems to me to be a sort of imaginative laziness. For an example of the concentration which can be achieved by a first-rate poetic imagination I would point to the craftsmanship of Dylan Thomas, whose first volume has been succeeded by another of 25 *Poems*, which secured as sensational a success as good poetry can hope to do in England (simply by virtue of its eccentricity), and nearly set the *Times* on fire. There is an intense, furious controlled movement about his poems, an architectural rhythmic structure:

Then was my neophyte,  
Child in white blood bent on its knees  
Under the bell of rocks,  
Ducked in the twelve, disciple seas  
The winder of the water-clocks  
Calls a green day and night.  
My sea hermaphrodite,  
Snail of man in His ship of fires  
That burn the bitten decks,  
Knew all His horrible desires  
The climber of the water sex  
Calls the green rock of light . . .

Dylan Thomas, who was born in 1914, is usually bracketed with George Barker as exemplifying a break-away from the domination, in Auden, Day-Lewis and Spender, of political themes. About these last three poets little need be said except that their influence has been extensive and has in its time produced a crop of very feeble superficial imitators; their influence for good will continue in spite of this.

Barker and Thomas are outstanding among the younger poets, both having two impressive volumes to their credit.

## POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

Barker has been claimed by the communists, but his politics one would imagine to be anything but orthodox, and violently emotional. His long poem-cycle, *Calamiterror*, published last April, reveals an obsessed genius working in riotous color:

The gay paraders of the esplanade,  
The diamond harlequins, the acrobats,  
The gloriously lost in summer glades,  
The wanderers through the Acropolis,  
The ones who seek the times' shade  
Reclining by catastrophes,  
The figures of the downward grade:  
The gay shadows of the shade. . .

and a powerful sense of doom and terror in hysterical Europe:

When a dark time in a dark time  
Inundates and annihilates the mind . . .

contrasting strongly with the detached sarcasm of Auden, on similar themes. Both Barker and Thomas are preoccupied with their inward vision. This is Thomas:

The thirst is quenched, the hunger gone,  
And my heart is cracked across;  
My face is haggard in the glass,  
My lips are withered with a kiss,  
My breasts are thin.  
A merry girl took me for man,  
I laid her down and told her sin,  
And put beside her a ram rose. . .

And Barker:

The April horror grows over my September.  
I see my hand glittering with blood and tears  
Hanging at the bend of my arm like a leech member,  
Fatal, inspired to violence, sowing scars;

*London Letter*

Elevating itself in the anaconda stance  
Evolving devastation. I see my hand  
Passing over the palace of his face,  
Leaves it pale, bloody gap, blinded, blanched . . .

It is perhaps more honest to deal directly with one's dislocations than to project them to the external world of politics. And politically less dangerous. . . .

The poets I have so far mentioned are influences. Beyond these are many writers less widely known who have not so far collected their poems into volumes, and who are still at receptive stages of their careers. Mention should be made of the following: Gavin Ewart, a brilliant exponent of a sensuous, and Auden-like, journalistic technique—distinct from the other “journalism” I have mentioned—whose lyrical talent can produce lines of a genuine pathetic charm, as in *The English Wife*:

He had a steady hand  
And a clear eye.  
He was gay he was bland  
And as straight as a die.

I was never frigid  
I was never coy  
But O he has left me  
For a pretty boy,  
For a gay mechanic  
Unbuttoning overalls,  
More dangerous than movies  
Or the music halls. . . .

Ruthven Todd, who exploits a surgical vocabulary in the creation of macabre and cadaverous stanzas:

And I who had been dead for a very long time  
Rose from my sofa on the rotting blanched earth,

## POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

Tied my bones with tendons, scattering the worms,  
And walked anew the ways that lead to birth . . .

Julian Symons, detached and sophisticated:

Outside the personal agony, the blowing  
Rain and wind, the touching hands,  
The submarine descent below the lake, the sand,  
The lesson learnt, the salt sea flowing,  
And the transmutation of the personal evening  
Into the emptiness of houses where lie  
The broken soldiers and the toy harbour,  
The wolf's stare from an open eye . . .

Keidrych Rhys, the wild Welshman, bursts with sarcastic energy, writing satires and political poems (he is a Welsh Nationalist), in lines like:

Your daughters didn't much excite the flesh or face  
— Not quite the debs sharp idiom of beauty  
Grocery Warehouse and Lord Lieutenant  
Subtler the knighted carpet-bag maker  
Hobnobbed with Chapel Law and Parliament  
God investors born in a Cocktail Shaker  
I tried to impress like any young "bard"  
And saw thick money go back to the haggard  
Remember I left not wagging my tail  
"Rather rude" said Miss Gossip of the Western Mail.

Herbert Mallalieu is less energetic, his graceful sensuous stanzas depend for their effect upon their underlying mood, and for this reason he is less easy to quote. R. B. Fuller writes effective, though constrained, political and personal allegories; and the genuinely modern religious poems of John Short deserve notice, though he is a writer who publishes very little. I do not know anything about Mr. Maurice Carpenters, but I have found a rare sensitivity and intelligence in what I have seen of his work.

These last are poets of whom American readers may not have heard; they are just beginning to make reputations in England. So this is something like a tip from the stable, I am afraid, possessing the usual faults of such tips, a personal bias and a limited knowledge and appreciation.

Among recent books of verse which have attracted attention are Rayner Heppenstall's *Sebastian*; Charles Madge's *The Disappearing Castle*; Rex Warner's *Poems* and the *Journeys and Places* of Edwin Muir, a successor to *Variations on a Time Theme* of 1934. *Sebastian* is an involved and obscure religious poem, personal to the writer in a way which *Journeys and Places*, also on religious themes, is not. Mr. Heppenstall writes like this:

How, that lost evening, out of the former town, staring  
Into the town, whose lamps, over that long hill,  
Had pricked, for him, out, Hell's abstraction, warning of God's  
Loneliness, draining inward, loosing the flung sense,  
Dragging away, from the hands and breast and the head,  
All self-gladness, self-grief, he remembered . . .

and Mr. Muir like this:

The ancient pain returns anew.  
What was I ere I came to man?  
What shape among the shapes that once  
Aglong through endless Eden ran?  
Did I see there the dragon brood  
By streams their emerald scales unfold,  
While from their amber eyeballs fell  
Soft-rayed the rustling gold?  
It must be that one time I walked  
By rivers where the dragon drinks;  
But this side Eden's wall I meet  
On every twisting road the Sphinx

## POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

Whose head is like a wooden prow  
That forward leaning dizzily  
Over the seas of whitened worlds  
Has passed and nothing found to see. . . .

The preoccupation of many British poets with religious problems and experience is a fairly recent phenomenon, possibly a reaction from communist dialectical materialism. Poetry has always been closely connected with religion; indeed, for many people today communism itself is a substitute for a super-natural religion: the Russians are a very religious race. It can safely be prophesied that experience will push many poets in the near future into tight corners, in which there will be three possible attitudes, communism, catholicism, and escape (i.e. drugs, suicide, madness). Of course this doesn't apply merely to poets, but we should keep our eyes on these sensitive points of humanity. An examination of the work of Dylan Thomas reveals distinct Christian preoccupations, even obsessions, and his poems are crammed with images from the Old Testament. This is a subject about which I hope to write at a later date.

Meanwhile, in Devonshire Street this Christmas morning, a party of ribald drunkards emerges from the pub at the corner, a radio plays dance-tunes from France, Harold Monro is dead, and what a poet writes this evening or tomorrow will leave scarcely a trace on the mind of the nation. But we go on scribbling.

*D. S. Savage*

P.S. I hear that somebody is attempting to organize poetry readings in London public houses.

# NEWS NOTES

We are happy to have an answer for those correspondents who have asked us to supply or recommend a concise history of the magazine. In the November issue of *American Prefaces*, published at the University of Iowa, Mr. Charles Allen began a series of critical-historical studies of America's advance-guard periodicals. The first article in this series, which will later be published in book form, is devoted to POETRY. Here, in the space of about four thousands words, is the best short account that has yet been written of Harriet Monroe's stubborn and far-reaching achievement.

Dispensing with all needless encomiums, Mr. Allen's final judgment is impressive in that it is based on a sober review of the facts. He invites us to "glance at the so-called quality magazines for the months immediately previous to POETRY's appearance. What monthly diet was served by the *Atlantic*, by *Scribner's*, or by *Harper's*, the journals which most persons thought of as 'good' magazines? They carried from two to five verse tidbits a month, generally of a highly vapid character. . . ." And in later years, when POETRY was doing its most notable work, "the quality journals were resting in their nest of impervious smugness. Perhaps it would be unfair to expect them to brave the dangers of presenting new talent, but we might reasonably assume that they would print talent after it was discovered. It was amazing to watch *The Atlantic* sail serenely through the poetic revival, content until well past 1922 with its writers of 1913 — Fannie Stearns Davis, Margaret Prescott Montague, Margaret Cable Brewster. . . . Today, looking back on the war years, it is difficult to realize how vital it was to defend the modest and at least 2500 year old statements which the imagists drew up. That literary leaders became so excited, leaped to a clamorous denunciation against such age-old principles as 'To use language of common speech, but to employ always the exact word, not the merely decorative word, to present an image, to produce poetry that is hard and clear, never blurred or indefinite,' can be accounted for only by the fact that the nation's verse had been for twenty-five years in a state of cant and doldrum."

All the important battles, victories, and half-victories of POETRY's untiring campaign are noted by Mr. Allen, including "the contest for the poet's right to proper remuneration, the defense of *The Masses* and other radical journals when they were victimized by



## POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

war hysteria, the help it extended to many little magazines." But this writer also looks to the future and is sanguine enough to predict "a second quarter of a century as inspiring as that just past. As we glance at the magazine's record we find it largely a reflection of the Monroe spirit. It was hers, it is hers; its standards still mirror her personality." The student will find this article an excellent introduction to Harriet Monroe's forthcoming autobiography, *A Poet's Life*.

Carl Van Doren, chairman of the Elinor Wylie Poetry Fellowship Committee, announces that Marion Strobel has been appointed to the executive board. Other recent additions to the committee of 88 are Fannie Hurst, Mrs. Ira Nelson Morris, Mrs. Edgerton Parsons, Ben Ray Redman, Mrs. Richard S. Reynolds, Col. Theodore Roosevelt, Martha Plaisted Saxton, Lyman Beecher Stowe, and the editor of POETRY. The committee, which is associated with the Academy of American Poets, is raising an endowment of \$100,000 for awards to poets. Headquarters are at 1 Wall Street, New York.

A stirring poem by Muriel Rukeyser, *Mediterranean*, has been issued in leaflet form with a reproduction of Goya's "Wreckage of War" on the cover. The leaflets, with individual envelopes, will be sold at ten cents each for the benefit of the Medical Bureau to Aid Spanish Democracy. Orders should be sent to the Writers and Artists Committee, 381 Fourth Avenue, New York.

Two radio programs, both conducted by poets, demand attention for the good quality of their broadcasts and for the work they have done in stimulating appreciation of modern poetry. During A. M. Sullivan's six years on the radio he has presented two hundred and twenty poets, both famous and unknown. His program, which is followed by schools and colleges who wish to keep their students informed of current developments in the art, may be heard over the WOR Mutual Network each Sunday from 2:30 to 3 p. m., E.S.T. David Ross also conducts a reading of poetry on Sundays, over WABC at 1:45 p. m. He received the award of the American Academy of Arts and Letters for good radio diction and has published a book for radio readers of poetry entitled *Poet's Gold*.

As a New Year's greeting to their customers, the B & G Sandwich Shops, a popular chain of restaurants, recently displayed placards bearing the following stanza by Elinor Wylie:

"In masks outrageous and austere  
The years go by in single file;  
But none has merited my fear,  
And none has quite escaped my smile."

We give this as an example of the unforeseen avenues of publication which poems, however deeply interred in anthologies and de luxe editions, may sometimes find.

Katherine Lord, manager of The Little Book House on Nantucket Island, Massachusetts, is now assembling material in verse, prose, and dramatic form for the 1938 numbers of her magazine, *The Harpoon*. Only unpublished material is wanted, and though no payment is made, the magazine is generous with free copies.

From Dillard University, New Orleans, comes announcement of *The Arts Quarterly*, a new journal of Negro art and literature, not limited to Negro contributors. It will feature poetry, short stories, articles, book reviews and illustrations, and will present "the point of view of those forward-looking educators who believe that art, creative literature, and creative activity should be placed on a plane comparable to that of research in our schools and colleges."

Geoffrey Grigson, founder and editor of England's *New Verse*, has been appointed to the staff of George G. Harrap & Co., publishers. He will act in a general advisory capacity and will have the special task of seeking new talent in the field of fiction.

The Poetry Society of Georgia announces a series of prizes ranging in amount from \$10 to \$50. The competition is open to everyone, and there are no special qualifications except for the Savannah Prize of \$25, which will be awarded to the "best poem of Southern low country local color possessing universal appeal." Manuscripts may be sent to the chairman, Mr. Sol J. Stern, 217 East 49th Street, Savannah, Ga., who will also furnish a list of rules on request.

A study of Ella Wheeler Wilcox and her times has been undertaken by Miss Jenny Ballou, author of *Spanish Prelude*, who requests that owners of letters from Miss Wilcox send copies to her for examination—or, if more convenient, the originals, which will be promptly copied and returned. She will also be grateful for any memories which the poet's friends or acquaintances may send. Miss Ballou may be addressed at Short Beach, Connecticut.

## POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

That lively phenomenon, *One Act Play Magazine*, announces that it is interested in poetic plays of "Greek length." The plays should be in one act. William Kozlenko is Editor, and the magazine is published at 112 West 42nd Street, New York City.

### NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

WILLARD MAAS, of New York, has appeared frequently in POETRY, as well as *The Nation*, *The New Republic*, *The Virginia Quarterly*, *New Directions*, and other magazines. A book of his poems, *Fire Testament*, was published by the Alcestis Press in 1935. A new book, *Concerning the Young*, is in preparation.

MARK TURBYFILL, whose first poems were contributed to POETRY and *The Little Review* in 1917, has long been prominent in the Chicago literary group and has also had a notable career as dancer with the Adolph Bolm ballet. In 1926 he was awarded our Levinson Prize for the title poem of his latest book, *A Marriage with Space*.

ALFRED KREYMBORG, well known as poet, critic, playwright, and puppeteer, is the author of several books of poems including *Scarlet and Mellow*, *Less Lonely*, and *Manhattan Men*. Since the historic days of *Others*, he has been an active force in the new poetry movement, more recently serving as an editor of *The American Caravan*. His new radio play, based on the housing problem and entitled *The House that Jack Didn't Build*, was broadcast over the Columbia national hook-up on January 15th.

C. F. MACINTYRE, of Los Angeles, was born in the middle west and has "tried everything from the newspaper and the stage to farming and teaching." His *Poems* (Macmillan, 1936) were reviewed in our issue of last August by Winfield Scott, who characterized MacIntyre as "the most interesting poet the late year introduced."

RAYMOND HOLDEN, of New York, has a distinguished reputation as poet, novelist, and critic. A new volume of his poems, *Natural History*, will be published on March 2nd by Henry Holt.

ANNE CHANNING (Mrs. Fairfield Porter) was born in Sherborn, Mass., in 1911, and now lives in Hubbard Woods, Illinois. She has contributed once before to POETRY, and to the *New Caravan*.

LINDLEY WILLIAMS HUBBELL, whose work has appeared in POETRY and other periodicals, is a New Englander resident in New York.

## Notes on Contributors

His two books of poems are *Dark Pavilion* (1927) and *The Tracing of a Portal* (1931), both published by the Yale University Press. A new book, *Winter-Burning*, will be published in the spring by Alfred A. Knopf.

WILLIAM FITZGERALD, a young Boston poet, was formerly associate editor of the magazine *Anathema*, and is the author of a book of poems, *Daekargus*, published in 1933. He has contributed both verse and criticism to POETRY.

The following poets make their appearance here for the first time:

ROBERTSON SILLARS, of Schenectady, N. Y., was born in 1916 in Glasgow, Scotland. His father, Captain David Robertson Sillars of the Highland Light Infantry, having been killed in the war, he was brought to America at the age of six. As a boy of sixteen he set up and printed twenty-six of his poems in pamphlet form under the title *A July Afternoon and Other Poems*; this pamphlet received commendation from the late E. A. Robinson. He is now in his Junior year at Swarthmore College, where he holds an Open Scholarship.

LOUIS SECOND is the literary alias of Louis Agassiz Shaw 2nd, of Topsfield, Mass. Born in Boston in 1908, Mr. Shaw published his first novel, *Pavement*, while an undergraduate at Harvard. In 1936 he founded the Children's Summer School in Topsfield, for children with exceptional abilities.

CARLETON WINSTON (Mrs. John H. Dietrich) was born in Minneapolis, Minnesota, where she now lives after several years' residence in the east and far west. She is the author of a book of poems, *Three Years Passing*, and has contributed to *Voices*, *Spirit*, *The New Humanist*, and other magazines.

This month's prose contributors are all familiar.

SAMUEL FRENCH MORSE has published verse and criticism in POETRY and other periodicals. He is doing graduate work in literature at Harvard.

D. S. SAVAGE, whose poems had the place of honor in our January verse section, is a young native of Essex now resident in London. He has contributed verse and prose to English periodicals and is at present compiling an anthology of "eight of the youngest poets, including some of those mentioned in his article.

## POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

C. A. MILLSPAUGH, born in Michigan in 1908, is now doing research work on a fellowship at the University of Chicago. He is the author of a book of poems, *In Sight of Mountains* (1936), and of a novel, *Men Are Not Stars*, announced for February publication by Doubleday, Doran.

JANET LEWIS, whose notable group of *Three Poems* appeared in our last issue, lives in Los Altos, California. Her long novel, *The Invasion*, published by Harcourt, Brace in 1932, received much praise from critics.

MARSHALL SCHACHT, of New York, is a well-known contributor to these pages, and was represented in January with a group of seven poems. We apologize for an error in make-up which caused the second stanza of Mr. Schacht's poem, *Two Winds on Nova Scotia*, to be printed in two parts. The stanza should not have been divided.

### BOOKS RECEIVED

#### ORIGINAL VERSE:

*Poems*, by Rex Warner. Alfred A. Knopf.

*Alfred the Great*, a poetic drama, by Ralph Gustafson. Reginald Saunders, Toronto.

*Streams from the Source*, by Helene Mullins. Caxton Printers. Caldwell, Idaho.

*Honey Out of Heaven*, by Amanda Benjamin Hall. Kaleidograph Press, Dallas, Texas.

*Cossack Laughter*, by Fania Kruger. Kaleidograph Press.

*Stay My Chariot*, by Elizabeth Jane Astley. Kaleidograph Press.

*Roaming Rhymes*, by Robert MacGowan. Poets' Press, New York City.

*The Carousel*, by Constance Entwistle Hoar. Ridgewood Herald Press, Ridgewood, N. J.

*Harvest of Youth*, by Edwin C. Graber. Priv. ptd.

*Poems, 1937*, by A. Nicolaeff. Shakespeare Head Press, Oxford, England.

*First Poems*, by Enoch Powell. Shakespeare Head Press, Oxford, England.

#### PROSE AND A REPRINT:

*The Modern Mind*, by Michael Roberts. Macmillan Co.

*Smoke and Steel and Slabs of the Sunburnt West*, by Carl Sandburg. Harcourt, Brace.

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# P O E T R Y

## A MAGAZINE OF VERSE

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### THREE POEMS

#### CHANGE MUST BE SERVED

THEY who fear change nest in the now-moment:  
Night-singing birds mistaking moon  
For the fixed sun: late dreamers on the bough.

They who mock change (mouths to the nipples norm  
Like sucking children) by sure death are nourished:  
That breast to war is tender: milk to the sword runs warm.

And they who would bind change to the private will  
Like falcon to the wrist; zone sky, and harness space  
— They too are lost beneath the turning wheel.

Say to all men: change is that rarest light  
Beyond the netted stars, unpinioned by  
The searching glass: strangely both rest and flight

## POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

Yet common as the hand's touch in meeting and parting,  
Familiar to joy and grief, the wound and the healing,  
Near as the root to earth, blood to the heart.

If by that light worlds turn and cells restate  
The strength of leaf and bone, then must the mind  
So measure growth, a nation claim its greatness —

If by that light the living are befriended  
Change must be served even as love is served:  
Nor feared nor mocked nor bound, but in our time defended.

### ORDEAL BY TENSION

The fanged love of nations,  
The fisted enterprise compelling  
Steel hawks against moonlight  
Over nocturnal Europe —  
Knowing these, our danger's  
Not when the wings plunge, but now:  
Now when the tongue's sentry  
Sleeps, and the enemy in the heel  
Itches for action,  
Now when flesh suffers  
The ague of suspense:  
Ordeal by tension.

The drums beat, the drums beat —  
We hear them in stale rooms,  
We lean from the windows  
Listening. Only the empty street.  
(No banners, no sharp glint  
Of sun striking metal, no marching.  
We dreamed, then. Mock, dream, the quick  
Pulse leaping!) — Here's daylight,  
Accustomed chair, breakfast, morning paper.  
But again the drums beat  
In the scare-bloated headlines:  
Threats, pacts, empty treaties,  
Ambassadors, dictators,  
Blood-darkened bargainers  
In the world's market-place.

This is our waking; and waiting  
Helpless while drums beat, morning  
By morning, puts day out of focus:  
Walking the perilous  
Tightrope of tension  
Earth sways beneath us,  
Lost balance betrays us.

These signs of our sick time, contagion  
Of sanity broken,  
We carry from house to house

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

(Death waits in those houses)  
In subway and restaurant,  
Shop, theater; in the doomed faces  
Of strangers we find them,  
In talk between friends:

"One move, and they're ready."  
"The League's scrapped and mortgaged."  
"In Spain now — and China . . ."  
"Can't hold out much longer:  
Christ, then, let's have it!"  
"Build up our battleships:  
. . . then we'll be in it!"

The drums beat, the drums beat —  
They call to the young men  
(The young so long bedded with  
Idleness, hunger)  
What other life for them?  
How shall we censure them?  
We too are proud,  
Keyed to adventure  
To leap the first barrier:  
How well they know us — the traders  
In men and profit, the makers  
Of skilled propaganda! —  
They harden and test us

Like fine-tempered metal:  
Shivering by day and sweating by night  
We flush at each rumor,  
Rebel at retraction,  
Cheer men at the barricades,  
Cry for defense.  
(Gone memory, honor,  
Compromise, pity,  
And reason, that poor ghost of peace)  
Steel whistle, blood music:  
The drums beat, the drums beat  
Till we shout for war — the only release!

CONNECTICUT COUNTRYSIDE

All afternoon we follow the trim roads threading  
The caught valley sun and the wind-sharpened hills,  
The little lakes like droppings of pearl among cedar,  
The nervous, named brooks, lacing light over granite,  
And the closed mills

In the shadow of willow — red brick glossy with ivy  
Edging the villages; under elms shaped for sleep  
Dun-shingled houses parlor-dark behind shutters,  
Obedient lawns, delphinium-blue gardens  
Sheltered and deep.

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

But what are the voices beneath this Sunday quiet,  
This false content, that whisper of danger — cry  
Already under the June green: what wound to  
The summer meadows, death to the eyelids of dreamers,  
Possessors? Why

Must that terror common to Asian plains, the far cities,  
The trade-doomed walls of Europe, her exhausted fields,  
Touch us here also, pluck at the vulnerable pattern  
(Long are the reaching fingers of the destroyers!)  
Till the fabric yields

And the roads split, lakes crack like glass, churches  
Crumble by the mill walls; and following the ghost  
Of bloom, the stench of carrion in the gardens  
Strikes our late senses: we who defer, deliberate,  
Watch, fear — and are lost.

*Ruth Lechlitner*

## TWO POEMS

### FACE ALIVE

Her senseless face, still living mortally,  
Stares now with eyes too far away to see  
What honor may have been or grace or love  
Or anything that they were quickened of.

It is not death, this open-mouthed decay,  
This aged face with nothing more to say:  
It is not death but a good life's reward  
And testimony to the unknown Lord.

### VENUS

So wide a sea you came from, your cold form  
Has wanted out of reason to be warm,  
So close a shell, your iridescent side  
Is as incontinent as the earth is wide.

*Witter Bynner*



POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

I DREAMED I WAS MASTER

I dreamed I was master,  
and the master, slave;  
and for every wrong  
I did him double wrong.  
I gave him fear and fawning ways,  
made his lips tremble and utter lies.

"Be dumb," I commanded, "be of servile mind,  
in learning weak and in pleasure poor,  
use back entrances, walk the servant's stair,  
a man of hunger, roofless in rain,  
prayed for in missions and served with swill,  
shunned and despised, companion of the louse,  
disease and penury your faithful friends;  
outcast of men, yet pleased with your lot,  
scratching with pleasure at the bite of bug."

Blows were his earnings, blows his hire,  
and blows I struck him with force and fury.  
I kicked his face, whipped wounds in his back,  
flayed him madly till he prayed for mercy,  
whined and whimpered in terror and pain.

"Let priests with their pity teach hope and patience,  
weep at your suffering, console you with tears.  
Their tears are salt and hurt your wounds the more,"

*S. Funaroff*

I jeered at his prayers. I taunted him, I laughed:  
"As long as you grovel there I need not fear,"  
and I beat him with delight. And as I dreamed,  
my master stood above me with a whip.

*S. Funaroff*

### SONG FOR 7 P. M.

Call to the coiled night slowly to unfurl  
Its fronded secrets; here in the cool cowed cloisters of the  
evening  
Call to the wind to uncluster  
From the voluted ear the conchoid curls.

Falls cigarette from the lips  
In tortile swirl of smoulder on the rain-foiled asphalt;  
Fall fingers from fingers untwisting, and, separate, enfold the  
Closer feel of the untouching tips.

All of the night unwinds off its spindle, and I  
From you unfold and hold myself whole and isolate;  
Always the true taction of souls is poised, as between anode  
And cathode, the charged duality of a battery.

*Norman Nicholson*

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

FROM THE FLORIDA EVERGLADES

SHELL-FISH

Shell-fish are like men in this —  
And like men only — that they build.

The lion and the elephant,  
Having roared, having filled  
The earth and air with trumpeting,  
Lie down to die, are dead indeed.

But shell-fish, slowly, whorl on whorl  
And layer on layer of welded limestone  
Or ledge of patient coral, build beaches,  
Islands, great peninsulas  
Of *terra florida*. So I give homage  
To shell-fish where the waters lave  
The edges of the universal grave.

NUPTIAL FLIGHT

Thousands of white ibis  
Are flowing in a great circle  
Like stars in the milky way.  
The circle is tilted like a plate  
And drifting, drifting  
Over the marsh

*Eunice Tietjens*

As the wind drifts,  
As thought drifts.

FLASHES FROM THE GLADES

I

The dwarf cypress rise like a mist  
    above the saw-grass.  
The birds float lazily against the dawn,  
And a shining coral snake  
Warms himself on a rock.

II

The lagoon breaks out a silver splinter,  
A fish jumping . . .

III

This tree  
Is like a snow-ball bush,  
So many white heron roost  
In its branches.

IV

Grey water, grey rain,  
And a sleek wading bird  
Greyer than steel . . .

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

V

Contorted mangrove trees  
Trail grey feelers in the water  
Tipped with barnacles;  
While fruit-like in their branches sit  
Clusters of hunched pelicans.

VI

The bay is melted satin  
Under the sunset.  
The wakes of the fishing boats  
Curve slowly in long arcs;  
And with a tiny showery sound  
A thousand minnows  
Ripple the glassy surface  
And are gone.

Peace will come with the moon.

*Eunice Tietjens*

## FIVE POEMS

### DEATH FROM NATURAL CAUSES

"Because the deceased left a sort of note, at first they thought his death was suicide; but the autopsy proved that he died from natural causes."—News item.

have learned much this year

within have grown quieter — much pain  
has taught me quiet

demanding less of living have  
more of life, turn  
more toward the future, seem  
mostly healed of the past

think less of my own lacks,  
more of bestowing, and my days  
seem richer — even in pain and grave illness seem oftener  
quick with the miracle and abundance of life

am I finding the soul, where separation  
ceases and matter is radiance the lotus of  
love that flowers in the ultimate heart?

there is white now among the hairs of my head

for much that I have learned  
no words  
no need for words

## POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

### EPITHALAMION: A FRAGMENT

Was it Persephone,  
was Persephone the one  
stolen and  
dragged under earth?  
Plundered?  
Who returned?  
Who still returns?

(Each tide of blossoms  
each orchard surge  
echoes again her veins.)

Slaking tonight the dark  
I've known too long, too long —  
in me, tonight in me:  
that tide, that  
holy surge.

### WARY TRAVELERS SUSPECT

Wary travelers suspect  
Mirage within seen splendor.  
But Everest of our plain,  
Oh Wisdom! let mine be eyes like  
Passionate Blake's that knew  
Reality's splendor  
Is not for the wary.

*James Daly*

FOR A TALKATIVE WOMAN

By the invisibility of song  
By the seven feathers of memory  
By the nine cloaks of tomorrow  
I implore you  
                    look up at the imminent sky  
                    look down at the cryptic earth  
Then close eyes and summon the moth of silence  
And once be still, be still.

STONE-STEEP THE PIER

Masts sighted, enemy signaled. The coastguards wore wigs of  
Snow and hoofed glasses for deer-sighting, all the while  
Incorrigibly laughing false extraordinary secrets  
And calling by name their invisible dogs

(Which even in daylight, they said, kept  
Baying the distant surf).

In tremendous bands they evolved beach-runes  
To inquire of the gulls such commonplaces as  
Do small yachts seem doves aflounder?  
Yet if a gull answered they shot him at moonrise.

It all suggested suburbs austere beyond the acid  
Metropolis of thought, and recalled one's defeated  
Steps after sensuality and one's bruises on the  
Trellis of vocabulary.



POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

I tell you I was glad when armistice came,  
I was glad when light lulled that sea!  
Stone-steep the pier that harbors reality's dreadnought.  
And inland, tigerish the twisted road not even dreams will  
climb.

*James Daly*

THE MOUNTAINS

I look to the far mountains  
To the stripped, desolate place —  
Over the lush lowlands  
The sharp precipice.

I remember mountains  
Before I remember life;  
My heart, their intimate,  
Will not lie safe.

Turning from the diffuse  
And multitudinous plain,  
Ever it rises to meet  
The pure outline.

*Margan Dutton*

## DREAM

She sleeps, my lady sleeps,  
Yet down the long lane of her flowing spine,  
Some wind beyond the dreamed stone pine  
Ruffles the marble quiet her slumber keeps.

The long, thin fingers slacken,  
The head turns, poised for fall;  
Lips open, throat mutes a call,  
The spun hair shifts, the threads shaken.

Not he who in the garden gave  
The word, the destined touch,  
Should see, though he see much,  
This slowly broken, this spent wave.

Of intimacy, this ultimate  
Troubles the last dark hidden deep  
Beyond the deadly marsh of sleep:  
Is kin to love, consanguine, too, of fate.

*Tristram Livingstone*

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

A MORNING IN THE 20th CENTURY

Deep in the fog of multitudes honeycombing history,  
Below the dance of the dimensions in mirrored sleep,  
These familiar noises cut at my cardboard hour:  
A train pulls into a spiral of dark sounds;  
A milkman shakes the low bells of milk bottles  
In the iron baskets of our civilization;  
The horse's hoofs whip up the wagon wheels;  
A cough reaches out an arm for an alarm clock;  
A small dog's bark runs after a truck's sound  
But makes no progress on the icy ground.

On my blood-and-bone balcony poised perilously  
Over the morning canyons of the present tense  
I arise to view the times I have awakened in:  
Europe spreads helpless hands called newspapers  
And leans against the horizon of a bleak intent;  
A dictator is eating the apple in our garden  
And war studies the scarred face of geography  
Behind the Stonehenge framework letting in myths;  
With distance stuck in its throat, a radio mutters;  
The world's philosophies clack, like loose shutters.

This is the shadow from under steel lids of sunlight  
That watches me dressing brightly in consciousness:  
I hear an early morning whistle hang a blue icicle  
Upon the lintel of my personal class struggle.

*Oscar Williams*

I must hasten to the heaven inhabited by breakfast  
Where lunch rooms lurch forward on rolling plates  
And coffee swings brown flowers through the senses —  
For I am a citizen of the three divided tenses  
And know a new day threatens to invade the sill  
With all the past an unanswered problem still.

*Oscar Williams*

#### WHAT THE GIPSIES LEFT

In the well by the twilight common  
The village girl dips, and spies  
The well-water blink, like laughter  
That lay in a gipsy-man's eyes.

Her sweetheart, coming to tryst her  
From his work around market and farm,  
Sees the moon, like a crooked shilling  
That lay in a gipsy-girl's palm.

*Mary Charles*

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

FOUR POEMS

HIERARCHY

Flame-throated birds in violent noon  
Blow back the sibilance of Eden's tree,  
And here the frigid-fingered moon  
Limns human ghost and deity.

Comes first the giver, who is God;  
Comes then the sower, who is Man;  
Lives then the flower and the sod,  
The seek-joy eye, the implying hand.

And next the proud appellate mind,  
Whom servant flesh imputes supreme,  
By dust-duration not defined,  
Builds temples of persistent dream.

Comes then the heart, and much annoyed,  
Its law a fire the passions preen,  
Song-loud it warns whom Spring enjoyed  
Of love's blue death while love's yet green.

ORPHEUS ALONE

Where may he go  
Who in his youth Spring's body owned?

*C. A. Millsbaugh*

Whose longtime heart that onetime like a star  
Shone, beats, baffled spirit, valvular.

Would this our lust  
Have mind-home's flaming fuel snuffed?

Though yet the feeding of the flock be finished  
And winsome landscape deft with girders furnished,

Must he wasting in inveterate dream  
Be what is not and yet what still he seem?

He secret keeps the moments of the moon, its ways;  
But is he wise?

In city not at home  
And in the country nowhere known.

Whence does he hurry then  
For whom no mat is clean, displayed in anger warning  
quarantine?

He has no faction  
Who is immortal in all save action.

But by his dream so driven  
He for an austere heaven will ever straitly be.

## POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

### THE ABILITY TO TRANSLATE

The caught in conflict, the mastered of hidden harm,  
Have only the wind and the rain in their words  
And, now and then, the accent of a motherly river.

Beautiful though such quality ever sounds,  
There are moments in time when the talent to assume  
Transcends the ability to absorb.

Show me him who is not dubious of his identity  
And I will show you him who can take on at will  
The reasonable unreason of a dog,  
Sniffing in human corners curiously,  
Shuddering and backing away.  
What he tastes and what he smells  
Have a sense of survival.  
He does not trust his eyes:  
Objects disappear upward into cloud,  
Hover with the lurk and stance of chaos.

It is helpful to become a leopard  
On a jungle bough, in times of danger.  
For lovers at the end of love  
There is the lexicon of the asp.  
Scientists in their pitiful towers  
Might well be wiser, learned  
In the Chinese frenzy of the cat.

*C. A. Millspaugh*

HERMAN MELVILLE

At noontide on that damaged shore  
He pondered origins, and the sea,  
The waves' vast crowd of cries, increased  
The knowledge of his eyes.

A maimed landscape rose behind him,  
And on its stony height the sun gazed glassily,  
Light through ice, was frosty on ungarmented trees.

At sunset on that pillaged strand  
Man's knowledge had its caused event.

Within that hour

The voluptuary, swollen in his dream,  
The ascetic, callous on his floor,  
Were this puffed foam and this lashed fishy bone.

*C. A. Millspaugh*



POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

TWO POEMS

SONG, DIMINISHING

The brave and beautiful  
Hear, on their finest days,  
The sound of music rising,  
Or maybe a dream of music,  
Sprung from the secret source,  
Risen from underground.

The generous and warm  
In clearest weather, see  
A lustre laid on the air,  
Color beyond all shining,  
The brightest kind of storm.

The generous and warm,  
The beautiful, the brave,  
Perish, are lost, or fail  
In the world's perilous war.

The prism, the chord, the man  
Resolve their harmonies;  
Themselves they cannot save.

Darkness and underground  
Receive the broken form.

They die, but they have been.

*Rolfe Humphries*

SONG HEARD IN A NEW HOUSE

Mirror no more the sigh, the care ;  
No longer be the other I  
Beheld through water, in despair,  
Seen as in glass, or double air —  
Mirror no more the sigh.

But, turning, let reflection grace  
Marvels that burn in air, and shine  
Material in outer space:  
Or give back Sorrow's pure and perfect face,  
Mirror no longer mine.

*Rolfe Humphries*

OIL OF DADA: FIRST LOOK

Call over the men from Zurich. Call a raft  
Of Viennese big shots. Follow, follow the gleam!  
Much have I traveled, dancing-eyed and daft;  
Attacked with scalpel many a bulging dream;

Rung bells in many an obscene vestibule  
At ultimate doors with transoms horror-bright;  
Heard Delphi whimper and Dodona drool —  
But da, da, da! the canvas dribbles light!

*Garrett Oppenheim*

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

FOUR POEMS

A NOCTURNE FOR OCTOBER 31ST

The night was faint and sheer ;  
Immobile, road and dune.  
Then, for a moment, clear,  
A plane moved past the moon.

O spirit cool and frail,  
Hung in the lunar fire!  
Spun wire and brittle veil!  
And trembling slowly higher!

Pure in each proven line!  
The balance and the aim,  
Half empty, half divine!  
I saw how true you came.

Dissevered from your cause,  
Your function was your goal.  
Oblivious of my laws,  
You made your calm patrol.

A SUMMER COMMENTARY

When I was young, with sharper sense,  
The farthest insect cry I heard  
Could stay me ; through the trees, intense,  
I watched the hunter and the bird.

Where is the meaning that I found?  
Or was it but a state of mind,  
Some old penumbra of the ground,  
In which to be but not to find?

Now summer grasses, brown with heat,  
Have crowded sweetness through the air;  
The very roadside dust is sweet;  
Even the unshadowed earth is fair.

The soft voice of the nesting dove,  
And the dove in soft erratic flight  
Like a rapid hand within a glove,  
Caress the silence and the light.

Amid the rubble, the fallen fruit,  
Fermenting in its rich decay,  
Smears brandy on the trampling boot  
And sends it sweeter on its way.

IN PRAISE OF CALIFORNIA WINES

Amid these clear and windy hills,  
Heat gathers quickly and is gone;  
Dust rises, moves, and briefly stills;  
Our thought can scarcely pause thereon.

With pale bright leaf and shadowy stem,  
Pellucid amid nervous dust,

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

By pre-Socratic stratagem,  
Yet sagging with its weight of must,

The vineyard spreads beside the road  
In repetition, point and line:  
I sing, in this dry bright abode,  
The praises of the native wine.

It yields the pleasure of the eye,  
It charms the skin, it warms the heart;  
When nights are cold, and thoughts crowd high,  
Then 'tis the solvent for our art.

Or when with sleep the head is dull,  
And art has failed us, far behind,  
Its sweet corruption fills the skull  
Till we are happy to be blind.

So may I yet, as poets use,  
My time being spent, and more to pay,  
In this quick warmth the will diffuse,  
In sunlight vanish quite away.

*Yvor Winters*

ON THE PORTRAIT OF A SCHOLAR OF THE  
ITALIAN RENAISSANCE

The color, quick in fluid oil,  
Affirms the flesh and lambent hair ;  
And darkness, in its fine recoil,  
Confesses that the mind is there.

With heavy lip, with massive curls,  
With wisdom weighted, strong and dense,  
The flesh is luminous as pearls ;  
The eyes ingenuous but intense.

The face is noble ; but the name  
Is one that we shall scarcely hold.  
It is a vision in a frame,  
Defined and matted down with gold.

Our names, with his, are but the lees  
Residual from this clear intent ;  
Our finely grained identities  
Are but this golden sediment.

*Yvor Winters*

EZRA POUND'S VERY USEFUL LABORS

THIS is the thirtieth year since the publication of Ezra Pound's first book of poems. The occasion, for it is an occasion, is marked, as it should be for so faithful a poet, by the publication of ten new cantos of his long poem,<sup>1</sup> and it is obvious that a response of congratulation and gratitude is precisely what he deserves. The fact that Pound himself has from time to time fired twenty-one gun salutes to his own efforts ought not to deter us. An enormous transformation of sensibility has occurred since the printing of the first volume of *Personae*, and no man can have had more to do with this transformation than Ezra Pound. The contrasting states of culture in 1908 and 1938 are subjects for the literary historian, but what has happened can be suggested briefly and by a mere array of names. No complacency, no great satisfaction with 1938 need be assumed. Some of the names for 1908 are Hamilton Wright Mabie, William Dean Howells, Richard Harding Davis, and George Woodberry. American culture was an insupportable desert from which Pound, and before him, Henry James, and but a few years later, George Santayana and T. S. Eliot found it necessary to depart. They left for various reasons—both Eliot and Pound seem to have gone merely for a year of study—but the significant fact is that they did not return. What has happened in the interim cannot, it is clear, be attributed to the operation of any individual mind; the

<sup>1</sup> *The Fifth Decad of Cantos*, by Ezra Pound. Farrar & Rinehart.

*Ezra Pound's Very Useful Labors*

World War, to take the big example, broke down a great deal in the region of attitudes and feelings which Pound, though he had shouted one hundred times more loudly than his usual wont, could never have moved. But here is another array of names: James Joyce, William Butler Yeats, Robert Frost, Wyndham Lewis, William Carlos Williams, Marianne Moore, and many more could be added. They have at least this fact in common, that at one time or another, one way or another, Pound helped them very much, often howling their merits in the ineffable jargon of his public epistles. Joyce has said publicly that it was Pound who secured a publisher for *Ulysses*, and there was, before this, all that Pound said and wrote about Joyce's first two books. There is also the famous story of how, after years of the hardship of loneliness, Robert Frost went to England and was discovered by Pound immediately upon the reading of his poetry. Besides these quasi-editorial activities, there is the profound effect which Pound's verse has had upon the writing of T. S. Eliot: not only obviously in poems like *The Fortune of the Magi*, and *The Waste Land*, but in the most minute details: the first line of *Ash Wednesday*, "Because I do not hope to turn again," is a translation of Cavalcanti's *Perch'io non spero tornar già mai*, and thus probably derives from Pound's early translation of Cavalcanti. The very variety of Pound's services is impressive and one cannot but be amazed at the examples of generous attention on Pound's part which crop up from time to time. To take an instance which is not well known, John Peale



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Bishop writes in his essay on Hemingway that "in Paris, Hemingway submitted much of his apprentice work in fiction to Pound. It came back to him blue-penciled, most of the adjectives gone." And then there is all that Pound has done in Chinese poetry, in Provençal poetry, in Latin poetry, and from the very beginning in 1912, in *POETRY: A Magazine of Verse*. So many more fruitful activities of this nature could be rehearsed that it is necessary to stop here in order to avoid a mere list.

The Cantos ought to be regarded as arising from this whole complex of interests. They are the production of one who has devoted himself almost wholly to literature, setting up literature, whether knowingly or not, as his ruling value. When in 1934 Pound declared that he was giving up literature for economics, no one really interested in the matter was disturbed, and there was no reason to be, for ten new cantos appeared a short while after. When we consider this devotion to literature, we come upon the essential characteristic of the Cantos: their philological discussions, their translations, their textual references, their peculiar and unceasing interest in how things are said, not to speak of the various dialects and slangs which are introduced, and the habitual quotation, of letters, codices, and other documents.

The standpoint from which the various heroes of the Cantos are represented is also a good indication of this point. Mozart is celebrated in *Canto XXVI* not as the great musician, but because of an insulting letter to the Archbishop of Salzburg, Mozart's epistolary style of invective

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being so interesting that it must be quoted. T. E. Hulme, whose thought affected so many of Pound's generation so much, is mentioned not as a philosopher of great promise, but as the soldier who went to the trenches with books from the London Library, and when the books were lost in a trench explosion, the London Library became very annoyed, and when Hulme was wounded and in the hospital, he read Kant "and the hospital staff didn't like it." Andreas Divus is mentioned because he was a good translator of Homer, and Helen of Troy is introduced briefly by means of several puns in Greek and a quotation, finely translated, from *The Iliad*. Another figure held up for admiration is old Lévy, a German scholar of Provençal whom Pound visited in order to find out the meaning of the word "noigandres": Lévy's dialect is reproduced and the sensuous character of the place where the interview occurred, Freiburg, is described, the philological interest apparently giving rise to the whole passage, which is one of the most beautiful in the Cantos. The Italian villains of the Renaissance and Thomas Jefferson are both sung by the poet partly because they were patrons of the arts, partly because they wrote interesting letters. And as for the villains, the same attitude determines their choice, and we get as an example of complete stupidity such an anecdote as this one from *Canto XXVIII*:

"Buk!" said the Second Baronet "eh. . .

"Thass a funny lookin' buk" said the Baronet

Looking at Bayle, folio, 4 vols., in gilt leather," Ah. . . .

"Wu . . . Wu . . . wot you goin' eh to do with ah. . .

". . . ah read-it?"

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The generalization which flows from these instances is almost too obvious to be mentioned: Pound has been the pure literary man, the complete man of letters; the concern with literary things, with the very look of print upon the page, is at the center, the source, of his writing. It would be possible, but difficult, to exaggerate this attachment, for it infects the Cantos at every point, and even in this latest volume under review, which is devoted to a long history of the origins of usury proceeding through many cantos (with typical interruptions), the presentation of the facts is made in terms of textual references, signatures upon documents, their dates, and the idiom in which the documents were written. From this standpoint the Cantos are the long poem of a wandering scholar without chair, without portfolio. And it is tempting, but not sufficiently tempting, to attribute this kind of prepossession to the fact that when Pound went to Europe to study texts for a thesis on Lope de Vega, he left a country where a thoroughgoing devotion to literature as an important element in the life of an educated man had for a long time been a rare or academic or sterile thing.

Much is to be gained by keeping this in mind when we read the Cantos. We understand why a poet with such interests resorts so often to allusion, and we see that if we want to know what the poem is about, we had better read it as it was written, in the shadow of many books. But more than that, the values by which men and things are judged seem actually to be determined by a belief, or rather feeling that literature is the greatest good in the life of

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mankind. In the Kung canto, where the dominant values of the poem are explicitly declared, we have, to begin with, a quotation from the books of Confucius. And among the emphases, order, fit ritual, a temple, mandolins, and other things related to art, we are given the key statement about government:

And "When the prince has gathered about him  
"All the savants and artists, his riches will be fully employed"

and this is one of the central motives behind the later concern with usury and economics, the fact that good writers are not adequately supported and published, as Pound has explained in his prose. Or again, as Kung says in conclusion:

"Without character you will  
be unable to play on that instrument  
Or to execute the music fit for the Odes."

The implication is that we ought to have character merely for the sake of being good poets. The opposite extreme, as of I. A. Richards, is to suppose that the Odes exist in order to make character possible.

The facile thing would be to say that Pound's vision was "one-sided," or a version of the ivory tower and sheer aestheticism, or a picture of the nature of things through the medium of books. The truth, however, is that Pound has been standing still on this basis, occupying this particular balcony, but has turned his gaze in a great many directions, so that the Cantos represent and contain a good deal more than the perspective from which they were written, although so much of what they contain is naturally in terms

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of that perspective. If, then, before going on to consider the Cantos in themselves, we examine them as a source of literary influence and a profound modification of poetic practice, we find immense profits. The most important and impressive fact about what Pound has done to extend the medium of poetry is clearly the versification. It is not only that some great modes of poetry — direct statement, description, speech, and the movement of the poem itself — have been given fresh kinds of rhythm, but that, above all and extreme as the claim may seem, our capacity to *hear* words, lines, and phrases has been increased by the Cantos. In this new volume, for example, in *Canto XLV* and again in *Canto XLI*, there is this chant:

With *Usura*

With usura hath no man a house of good stone  
each block cut smooth and well fitting  
that design might cover their face,  
with usura  
hath no man a painted paradise on his church wall  
*harpes et luihes*  
or where virgin receiveth message  
and halo projects from incision

and so, through many repetitions and specifications which heighten the song, concluding with

Azure hath a canker by usura; cramoisi is unbroidered  
Emerald findeth no Memling  
Usura slayeth the child in the womb  
It stayeth the young man's courting  
It hath brought palsey to bed, lyeth  
between the young bride and her bridegroom  
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They have brought whores to Eleusis  
Corpses are set to banquet  
at behest of usura.<sup>1</sup>

To observe the way in which the emphasis is variously shifted and the key word brought in differently and monotonously avoided, it would be necessary to quote the whole Canto. There is nothing like it in English, except perhaps for a like chant against pity in *Canto XXX*. And in order to show adequately how many times and with what variety the Cantos display a progress, actually, in hearing, it would be necessary to quote at great length. No one seriously interested in writing ambitious poetry during the next hundred years will fail to be affected by these aural developments; if not directly, then through some poet who has himself digested Pound. T. S. Eliot is in part an example of such a poet, and it is Eliot who has pointed out that the Cantos "are a mine for juvenile poets to quarry." Related to this aspect of Pound's writing, and perhaps merely the same thing at another point is the effort throughout the Cantos to incorporate speech, to make verse out of speech, and if

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<sup>1</sup> It is interesting to observe in passing that in this particular canto, the attack on usury as a poetic statement can be separated from its connection with a particular economic theory by the mere device of substituting another three-syllable word with the same accents, for example, "capital." The point cannot be pressed very far, since the canto in question ties up with other discussions of economic theory throughout the poem, discussions which would prevent such a substitution. Nevertheless the possibility of substitution may exist wherever we are confronted with a good poem whose beliefs we do not accept.

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in this the poem is often distorted by Pound's love of the weirdest slangs and dialects, represented in his own kind of phonetics, the experiment is valuable even in its failure, and provides the basis for a dramatic verse which would attempt to display contemporary speech. And there is, in addition, what has been noted often before, the demonstration of style which is clean-cut, hard, sharp, and visual, the utter rejection of certain types of rhetoric, and the use of subject-matters which have not previously or recently been considered "poetic."

But most of all, literary practice benefits by the effort of the Cantos to digest a great many diverse elements, and to speak, in one poem, of many different *kinds* of things. This is a matter important enough to deserve a digression. It is clear that at the present time, the poet is confronted by an environment which, on the level of perception at least, is extremely disordered; perhaps one should say: un-ordered. One who rides in a subway train knows very well how advertisements, lights, stations, the faces in another passing train, are all shuffled together. Or when one walks in crowds one is amid thousands unknown to each other. Or in reading the daily newspaper, one is faced with a fund of events which are together mainly because they occurred upon the same date. The subway, the crowds, and the newspaper are merely easy examples. The point is that the writer who has a sense of his own time and a sense of intellectual responsibility toward his own experience must of necessity attempt to digest into his poetry these types of disorder. It

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is not a question of yielding to modern experience and merely reflecting it in one's writing by an equivalent disorder upon the verbal level; nor, except for certain kinds of lyric writing, is it possible merely to disregard the kind of experience which has become a part, to put it bluntly, of the nervous system. The difficult and ineluctable task is to say something intelligent and just about modern experience, and to be sure that modern experience is actually contained in the poem and the intelligence and the justice made relevant to it; not, on the contrary, to permit the poem to be absorbed wholly in edifying sentiments.

When, then, the *unrelatedness*, on all sides, of modern experience is recognized, it becomes simple to understand the way in which the Cantos are put together, and we can see what a lesson they afford for further acts of ordering. *The Waste Land*, *The Orators*, of Auden, and *The Bridge*, of Hart Crane, are further examples of the actuality of the problem, and if it is only in the instance of the first poem that anything has been gained from Pound, all these poems reinforce our understanding of what confronts the modern poet and of how the Cantos have to do with it. Thus in this new volume which brings us to *Canto LI*, we find Pound attempting to get no less than the subject-matter of economics into his poem.

Once, however, that we narrow our attention to the Cantos in themselves, forgetting their usefulness as a basis for future poetry, a somewhat different story seems to present itself, at least to one reader. Taking this long poem



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in itself, we must of necessity see it not as an integral part of a literary period, but in the company of other long poems of like ambition. The first lack to be noted from this standpoint is the absence of a narrative framework such as sustains every long poem which has become a portion of the whole corpus of poetry. Pound himself has declared that it is above all by its story that a literary work gains its lasting interest,<sup>1</sup> and it is difficult to see what basis for unity in an extended poem would be superior to that of plot. Pound's own words, in a letter to *POETRY* for August 1936, can be used against him:

"Whether the present generation of local talents think they are being superior in eschewing topics which interested Dante, Shakespeare, and Ovid, must be left to the local book trade to determine. . . . Whether anyone will rise to VITAL ethics remains to be seen. Whether poetry can get on without taking count of those motivations without consideration of which no novel can rise to being *histoire morale contemporaine* I very considerably doubt."

Pound's object in this letter is merely to state that he thinks other poets ought to write about economics, and in passing it ought to be noted that the purposes of the Cantos is stated in two succinct phrases, "VITAL ethics" and *histoire morale contemporaine*, but the citation of authorities, Dante, Shakespeare, Ovid, is very interesting since all of these poets depended upon plot in one fashion or another. The Cantos have no plot, although as the poem continues, the repetition of key phrases, characters and situations,

<sup>1</sup> "Narrative sense, narrative power can survive ANY truncation. If a man have the tale to tell and can keep his mind on that and refuses to worry about his own limitations, the reader, in the long or short run, will find him."

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makes more and more clear the kind of unity which the Cantos do have, a wholeness based upon certain obsessions or preoccupations, deriving itself from the character of Pound's mind, and displaying itself not in conjunction with the numerical order of the Cantos, but, so to speak, against the grain of continuity, which itself seems to be determined by the requirements of musical order, *melopoeia*, as Pound calls it. Or to put the whole issue differently, here we have a long poem without a hero, such as Achilles or Odysseus or *Virgilio mio*, or Agamemnon or Hamlet. Or if there is a hero, it is not Thomas Jefferson, Sigismundo Malatesta, and the other letter writers, but it is, in fact, Pound himself, the taste of Pound, above all his literary taste, that is to say, his likes and dislikes among books and the men who in some way have had to do with books or documents of some kind.

And when we examine the texture of the verse, we find lacking, amid much beauty of language and observation, other elements which have been characteristic of great poetry. The Cantos, as others have noted, consist of many surfaces, presented with great exactitude, but with nothing behind them. We get what is upon the surface, whether the idiom of a text which Pound is translating or the particular quality of the sunlight upon the water which Pound is describing; but we do not get anything more than this. Many touchstones from very different poets could be cited for comparison, but one example, the following line from Yeats, may suffice because the meaning itself states what is wholly absent from the Cantos:

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The uncontrollable mystery on the bestial floor  
and as against this, as an example of the moments when the  
Cantos are seeking sublimity, the following passage may be  
taken as characteristic:

The small lamps drift in the bay  
And the sea's claw gathers them,  
Neptunus drinks after neap-tide.  
Tamuz! Tamuz! !  
The red flame going seaward.  
By this gate art thou measured.  
From the long boats they have set lights in the water,  
The sea's claw gathers them outward.  
Scilla's dogs snarl at the cliff's base,  
The white teeth gnaw in under the crag,  
But in the pale night the small lamps float seaward

Beautiful as is this writing, the difference must be apparent.  
It is not the absence of a particular belief in any "uncontrollable mystery"—Yeats is no more a Christian than Pound—but the lack of interest in some of the most significant attitudes of the human spirit, which displays itself at times in the absence of seriousness as a *literary* quality. What is held up for our gaze most often in the Cantos is one man's brutal forthrightness, another's explosive speech, "verbal manifestations" of all sorts, and the quality of Mediterranean seascapes. We get as an interesting personality:

(Az ole man Comley wd. say Boys! . . .  
Never cherr terbakker! Hrwwkke th!  
Never cherr terbakker!)

It is the entrance of the cuspidor into the medium of epic poetry, and it is a very interesting entrance, witnessing Pound's wide sense of fact, but if *The Iliad*, *The Divine*

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*Comedy*, and the plays of Shakespeare are our actual criterion of good, better, best in literature, then we must say that such presentations (and the Cantos abound in them) are sometimes good, but never best. And sometimes they show a triviality of interest, and they show how oppressive "personality" often must be.

The obscurity of the Cantos, their dependence upon quantities of information which are not readily available is at once another definition of the poem, and yet not at all as important a handicap and burden as some suppose. The amount of learning necessary in order to understand the manifold allusions of the Cantos can easily be exaggerated, and could quite simply be put together in one supplementary volume such as has already been provided for Joyce's *Ulysses*. Pound is not as learned as he seems to be — the scattered character of his learning leads to the mistaken impression — and at any rate the amount of information which must be acquired is nothing compared to what must be done in order to read *The Divine Comedy*, or the effort we make when we learn a foreign language. It is curious, of course, that a writer of our own time and language should require so much external help, but the only question is: is the poem good enough? It is.

Another fact to be remembered is that if we take Pound's writing as a unity and read his criticism as well as the Cantos, we have another good light in which to read the poem. Peire Vidal, Actaeon, Andreas Divus, Henry James, Sordello, the Homeric Hymns have all been mentioned ex-

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plicitly in the criticism before the poem had been written, a point significant with regard to the whole pattern. And most of the relevant essays are to be found gathered together again in the book called *Make It New*, which selects from the previous books of criticism. Here, for example, there is a statement which illuminates the whole intention of the poem: "Most good poetry asserts something to be worthwhile, or damns a contrary; at any rate asserts emotional values." And here as one more example we find the very beginning of passages in the Cantos, such a passage as

And the great domed head, *con gli occhi onesti e tardi*  
Moves before me, phantom with weighted motion,  
*Grave incessu*, drinking the tone of things,  
And the old voice lifts itself  
  weaving an endless sentence.

It is Henry James, a patron saint of all literary craftsmen, as we are told in the prose:

The massive head, the slow uplift of the hand, *gli occhi onesti e tardi*, the long sentences piling themselves in elaborate phrase after phrase, the lightning incision, the pauses, the slightly shaking admonitory gesture. . . . I had heard it but seldom but it is all unforgettable.

Thus the poem rests upon the various stilts of Pound's criticism and other sources of information. But very few things are not so crippled in one way or another.

The justification of the whole is thus not the poem taken in itself, not yet, at any rate, before the poem is completed. The virtue which we can be certain of at present is, to sum up and repeat, the immense usefulness for future writing.

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Pound fits one of his own categories: he has been a great *inventor* in verse, and we know how few can be supposed to know the satisfaction of fulfilling their own canons of excellence.

*Delmore Schwartz*

REVIEWS

ONE OF THE BEST

*Poems*, by Louis MacNeice. New York: Random House.

SINCE MacNeice is sure to be compared to Auden, Spender, and Day Lewis—and for what are, in the main, superficial and irrelevant reasons—I had best say at once that I consider him, next to Auden, the most impressive writer of the group. Such a judgment, of course, is necessarily provisional. You cannot be absolute about poets in mid-career or say confidently what they will do next—whether they will develop, retrogress, or merely stand still. The most you can do is point out certain already apparent tendencies and directions which if followed up will probably lead to fresh fields or into a blind alley, as the case may be. Spender's recent verse, for example, is inferior to both Auden's and MacNeice's. But if the change Spender is now undergoing—a shift from the very personal lyricist of the early poems to the spokesman for a whole *class*—if this shift does not destroy his individual identity, if he can assimilate the new experiences and, above all, the new consciousness arising from his association with this class, what he will have to say will be more pertinent and valuable than

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anything to date in either MacNeice or Auden. Meanwhile we have in this, the first volume of MacNeice's poems to be published in America, the work of an original and distinguished talent.

Comprising as it does a body of verse written over a period of some ten years, this collection enables one to discern more fully than in many instances the general nature of the poet's development, his range of interests and style, and his present attainments. MacNeice is not, fortunately, just another imitator of his better-known *confrères*. Like all good poets he has of course been "influenced"—there are traces of Yeats, Auden, Eliot, Hopkins, and Spender—but his indebtedness to these and other men's work, in the sense of obvious aping of style or attitude, is slight. To judge by the few poems from his first book, *Blind Fireworks* (1929), that are reprinted here, it would seem that the style of his later work is a refinement of his earlier manner rather than a departure from it, and that its model is not any of the English poets mentioned above, but certain poems of Baudelaire's. At any rate, lines like the following, which are characteristic of the bulk of his verse:

And the street fountain blown across the square  
Rainbow-trellises the air and sunlight blazons  
The red butcher's and scrolls of fish on marble slabs,  
Whistled bars of music crossing silver sprays  
And horns of cars, touché, touché, rapiers' retort, a moving cage,  
A turning page of shine and sound, the day's maze.

seem to me to owe more than a little to the cadence and idiom of:

On entend çà et là les cuisines siffler,  
Les théâtres glapir, les orchestres ronfler;  
Les tables d'hôte, dont le jeu fait les délices,  
S'emplissent de catins et d'escrocs, leurs complices . . .

and similar passages from *Les Fleurs du Mal*. To be sure, MacNeice may never have read these lines; he may have absorbed their deliberate flatness of tone, their phrasing and inflection, via Eliot. The important fact is that he has made this idiom his own. It fits his sensibility. And in the more recent poems the style, like the sensibility, is less constrained, less self-conscious. Having perfected his medium he is now able to contrive more varied effects within the verse line and at the same time to embrace a greater amount and diversity of material.

It is, in fact, this variety and inclusiveness that make MacNeice an interesting and rewarding poet. Among his contemporaries only Auden surpasses him in these respects. He has himself stated the virtues and limitations of his method:

All over the world people are toasting the King,  
Red lozenges of light as each one lifts his glass,  
But I will not give you any idol or idea, creed or king,  
I give you the incidental things which pass  
Outwards through space exactly as each was.

The "incidental things" he gives us — that is, his images — are for the most part freshly observed, concrete, and specific. Best of all, he can take familiar, everyday scenes and objects and make them new and surprising, as witness:

Not the twilight of the gods but a precise dawn  
Of sallow and grey bricks, and newsboys crying war.



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or:

The pedals of a chance bicycle  
Make a gold shower turning in the sun.

Yet his poems, though filled with observations of this kind, are never merely an inventory or catalogue of objects.

Indeed, as others have noted, MacNeice is able to combine concrete images with abstract, general statements, the one serving to illuminate the other. The long and not entirely successful *Ode* provides a good example. The poet has been speaking of his son, symbol of a new generation and what he hopes will be a new way of life:

And let him not falsify the world  
By taking it to pieces;  
The marriage of Cause and Effect, Form and Content  
Let him not part asunder.

In the Birmingham Market Hall at this time  
There are horseshoe wreaths of mauve stock  
Fixed with wire and nailed with pale pink roses  
The tribute to a life that ran on standard wheels —  
May his life be more than this matter of wheels and wire.

This practice, which Auden shares, permits greater explicitness on the poet's part — as opposed to the method of much of the best present-day verse, in which extra-literary values are implicit — and should help to make poetry more immediately intelligible to the ordinary reader. It is also appropriate to the "propagandist" duties that poetry has lately taken on.

Intelligence, sympathy, imagination, sensitivity, wit — all these qualities MacNeice possesses to a greater degree than most of his contemporaries. What his verse noticeably lacks

at present is impact and inevitability — the impact and inevitability that spring from a profound and historically accurate insight into one's age, and that no amount of technical skill alone can command. They are qualities more easily felt than defined; they occur when a poet has penetrated to the heart of his material, when from a miscellaneity of facts and sentiments he has seized the revealing and significant one. Reading, we recognize the essential rightness of the artist's insight, and are startled by the sudden illumination created — whence the poem's impact. MacNeice has observed that much of Auden's strength is attributable to the fact that he is always taking sides, and I think this is one reason why the best of Auden's poems have an impact that his do not. In his recent work, however, MacNeice seems to be turning in this direction. The sentiment expressed in *Ode* (1934), for example:

I cannot draw up any code  
There are too many qualifications  
Too many asterisk asides  
Too many crosses in the margin

is very different from that of the concluding lines of *Eclogue from Iceland*, written in 1936:

Minute your gesture but it must be made —  
Your hazard, your act of defiance and hymn of hate,  
Hatred of hatred, assertion of human values,  
Which is now your only duty.

. . . . .

And, it may be added, it is your only chance.

While this is pretty feeble when put beside Auden's "Make action urgent and its nature clear," it does indicate that its

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author has not been content to stand still. And the *Eclogue*, it should be remarked in passing, is a much more unified and forceful poem than the *Ode*.

MacNeice is already a fertile and arresting writer. Such poems as the *Eclogue* just mentioned, *Snow*, *Nature Morte*, *August*, *Eclogue by a Five-Barred Gate*, *Iceland* and *Song* prove that he has the capacity to become one of the best poets not only of his own generation — he is already that — but of our time.

T. C. Wilson

“AND SO GRADUALLY NOTHING IS SAID”

*New Directions in Prose and Poetry, 1937.* Edited by James Laughlin IV. New Directions, Norwalk, Conn.

The writers in *New Directions* seek to avoid the pitfalls of Naturalism. They avoid reporting and word-repeating. They distort or present their messages and tales in allegory. They wrench language and syntax. They revere Franz Kafka, a writer, now dead, who never resolved his own inner conflicts sufficiently to take measure of his world. They admire, also, E. E. Cummings, who is completely familiar and romantic, and Gertrude Stein, the dummy-keyboard on which Hemingway practiced his finger exercises before he tried to play. Joyce, too, they profess to follow, never seeing that it is by his extreme precision in the use of a real world interpreted through language that Joyce succeeds where they fail. In general these “new” writers are not very new. They resemble the poorer post-war sur-realists, and they do not

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understand that fairy-tales, legends, myths and allegories become significant only when they interpret understandably a recognizable reality.

The artist has two tasks: he must organize his own sensibilities in reaction to reality and then present reality as pointed and ordered by his vision. Since the writer employs language, he must know the precise degree of its elasticity in the process of communication. Beyond this he cannot stretch it. If the writer employs symbols they must be illuminating, not merely untranslatable flotsam of the subconscious, and not insultingly obvious. It is not very illuminating to be told that "the lion shall no longer eat the lamb," nor that "the man went over to the safe and opened it. He took out a bottle of champagne and a fish. He gave the fish to the horse who ate it. The man poured some of the champagne into a pot and put it on the stove to warm up. When it was hot he drank it." This kind of upside-down game is too easy.

What is behind this disciple-ship for such writers as Kafka and the young novelist, Rex Warner? We are between two waves of history, and the second wave towers but does not fall. The old literature of the sensibilities must be preserved. The new literature of the Marxian thesis is immature. Writers want their cake and they want to eat it. Therefore we have these many attempts at digestion and regurgitation. Down goes the pudding of Freud, Jung, and Social Credit, all thoroughly mixed, and up comes a fairy story! "New" writers cling to the old while they espouse the new, not

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seeing that "newness" can apply either to technique or to subject matter — most of all not seeing that any writer must first familiarize himself with the outlines of a new subject matter before he can gauge how through proportion or distortion it may become art. Most of the authors collected in this volume do not take themselves seriously enough; they mistake novelty for newness, fancy for allegory. Among them is not one important writer who has not already said all he has to say. "New directions" are given us, here, by the older writers, now a little tired. The younger, follow.

But let us get down to particulars: Delmore Schwartz is young and seems talented, not as a poet, but as a story teller. Henry Miller is a "shocker" with some vitality in portraying decadence and sordidness. The poets are not very interesting: Cummings is the familiar Cummings, William Carlos Williams is not represented by his best work. The younger poets are not exciting. Gorham Munson's pompous announcement of the great novel to come — the "social-credit novel!" — introduces no novel of any importance. Saroyan gone symbolic forsakes his one virtue of spontaneity. Gertrude Stein's play is amusing, but not so good as *Four Saints*. Montagu O'Reilly is convincingly mad, but not clear. Jean Cocteau is, thank heaven, completely delightful. He is the war-horse of sur-realism and knows how to gallop. All in all, this collection is disappointing. One gets the general impression that these writers are sentimentalists trying a new angle of approach by standing on their heads. As for their use of language, they "wrestle" with it, as they propose

*"And So Gradually Nothing Is Said"*

to do, but it is a question as to whether or not they break its neck. At all events it is left often thoroughly disjointed. "And so gradually nothing is said," as Gertrude Stein remarks in the closing lines of her new play, *Daniel Webster*.

Eda Lou Walton

MORE THAN PROMISE

*Hounds on the Mountain*, by James Still. Viking Press.

A careful consideration of the vocabulary used in these poems will provide as adequate comment as any on James Still's abilities as a poet. "Poetry is composed of words and . . . whenever anything at all happens in poetry it happens in the medium of words," writes R. P. Blackmur in an elaboration of that point contained in an essay on Emily Dickinson (*Southern Review*, Autumn 1937). This approach places judgment on the gratefully solid grounds of the use of poetry's material medium. *Hounds on the Mountain* makes proper grist for this kind of analysis: both because of its freedom from "doctrine" of any variety, and because the poems are self-classified as "regional," a kind of writing which usually stakes, as it should, a good deal on distinguishing verbal characteristics.

What most immediately strikes me is the plethora of descriptive words — and how remarkably little they succeed in describing. Choosing at random, I find page after page averaging two adjectives to the line. They are of such choice and run in such combinations as: "dark sudden flight," "strange flowering," "swift heart," "earth's dull throat."

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Not only do such words blur the nouns they should clarify (and that stock of nouns is in desperate need of sharper revelation), but also, the constant alternation of modifier-noun, modifier-noun—"Rub hard careless hands over quivering muscles/And peer coldly into moist sad eyes" (*Horse Swapping on Troublesome Creek*)—makes for a clumping monotonous rhythm. The adjectives, indeed, hurl us toward the nouns (*ad-jacere*) until we are bumped out of all response.

In poetry which makes something of its geographical contributives, I have always found a small body of unfamiliar words or idioms which send me to the dictionary, just as the concomitant place-names lead one to the gazetteer. This of course, is only a special and more obvious example of the general fact that any writer with a fresh sensibility has his personal, re-vitalized vocabulary. These out-of-the-way words are the signs under which the poet has apprehended his experiences. Their unfamiliarity is his strength, for with it he may jar the reader into a "poetic" perception.

Of place-names there are, in these poems, a plenty: Flax-patch Hollow, Sand Lick, Knott County, Squabble Creek. Also with some newness come: pennyroyal, dulcimer, linsey-cloth, night-jar. These things, as Still writes, are his "heritage." But too often his poetic emotions appear to be inherited not so much from the Kentucky Hills as from the English Lake Poets. Too many of the poems go up in vacuous pantheism. "I am a hill uncharted, my breathing is the wind./I am horizon. I am earth's far end." This emotional uncorseting,

familiar to us all in adolescence, is no more typical of the Cumberland Mountains than it is of New York City. Nature in the raw, except in the most disciplined mysticism, seldom makes good poetry, simply because it does lack definition, communicable objectivity — is “beyond words.”

I do not think it is merely the imagination of prejudice which makes me believe that Still's best poetry is found when he deals with small or truly local experiences. The three poems about coal-mining towns, entitled *Earth-Bread*, are good. “This is the eight-hour death, the daily burial.” *Pattern for Death* is clear — “The spider puzzles his legs and rests his web on aftergrass.” A longer piece, *Year of the Pigeons*, is probably the most sustained work in the book. The story of the pigeons' devastation of the crops, and the extermination of the pigeons, has overtones both of music and emotion.

Come with clap nets, O come with hawk and buzzard to this feast  
Upon the breasts of heaven. Prowl with skunk and fox  
To sever these soft throats; light up the stinking sulphur pots  
In the night forest. O come with death's long flail and pole  
For this ripe manna.

In the book's last line Still declares that “being of these hills I cannot pass beyond.” If this is a serious statement of definition, and not just a pleasantly dramatic valediction, then there must be a considerable alteration in his relationship to his material. Briefly speaking, he must in every way go “deeper.” To illustrate: In *Mountain Dulcimer*, and frequently in his poems, he presents the subject, I feel, in its quaint, picturesque aspect — like the Vermont farmer who



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has learned to call the old porch chairs "antiques." Being a Kentucky poet should mean presenting Kentucky in words in such a way that after we have felt the poetry in its local oddity, we will come through finally to the emotion which is not local at all, but common to everyone; so common that we probably could not feel it unless apprehended in a strange guise.

It makes little difference, however, what limitations he acknowledges, for they are not an arguable matter. The only question is of accomplishment within the individual's restrictions. The progress within those bounds is the same for everyone: "a continual surrender of himself to something which is more valuable."

*Sherman Conrad*

### NEWS NOTES

The bill to provide for a permanent Bureau of Fine Arts (H.R. 9102) has been rewritten and reintroduced in the House of Representatives, with clauses designed to insure the competency of artists, writers, and musicians employed, and to remove all risk that the Bureau may function merely as a relief project. This bill contains the promise of what may be the most important cultural development of our time. If it is defeated, the reign of barbarism which is spreading in Europe and which threatens America will have won an advance victory. Every friend of literature and the arts, every reader of POETRY, can easily send a telegram or letter to his representative urging the passage of H.R. 9102. Better still, both a letter and a telegram — but at least a post-card.

An effective and interesting exhibit of letters, manuscripts, and photographs from POETRY's collection is currently on view at the gallery of the Renaissance Society, in Wieboldt Hall of the University of Chicago. This display, which has received attention from the local and national press, is due to the artistic showmanship of Inez Cunningham Stark, president of the Society, and a good friend of the magazine and its founder. The exhibit will be

open to the public every afternoon until March 15th. This is part of a large body of material which was bequeathed to the University by Harriet Monroe and which will be housed in a permanent collection on the campus.

The annual dinner of the Poetry Society of America was held on January 20th at the Biltmore Hotel in New York. The new president, Padraic Colum, introduced the guests of honor: Robert Nathan, John Bakeless, Mary Colum, Carl Carmer, and Rachel Field. Medals were presented to Henry Goddard Leach, the retiring president, and to Dr. Norman Guthrie, in recognition of his services to poetry. Dr. Guthrie, during his twenty-five years as pastor of St. Mark's-in-the-Bouwerie, has given four poetry programs a year, with from one to twelve poets reading on each occasion.

The Caroline Sinkler Prize of \$100 is being offered by the Poetry Society of South Carolina for the best unpublished poem by a southern writer. The competition closes March 28th. Inquiries and manuscripts should be addressed to the Secretary, 62 Broad Street, Charleston, S. C.

*The Partisan Review* continues to justify its existence with excellent monthly issues containing a generous assortment of essays, poems, fiction, and book-reviews. An interesting feature of the February issue is a "Little Anthology" of new poems by Wallace Stevens, Winfield Scott, John Wheelwright, Delmore Schwartz, and others. Also (*rara avis* in left and right journals alike) a really funny satirical poem, entitled *Dixie Doodle*, by James Agee. This limns the idealized figure of "an indisputably aryan Jeffersonian Agrarian" who sits on a rail fence

"Swaying lightly with a hot cawn bun,  
Quoting Horace and the late John Donne,  
He will keep the annual figgers  
Safe away from the eyes of niggers,  
And back his Culture up with whip and gun:  
"And in every single solitary region  
We'll each frame our millennium  
In a native-hewn proscenium  
Unbedunged by any nonindigenous pigeon."

The same issue contains a reply to our question whether the magazine is justified in calling itself "revolutionary." In this reply the editors define still more clearly their metaphysical policy.

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In the *Revue de Paris* for December 15th, Paul Valéry published part of a long essay entitled *Mémoires d'un poème*. This is one of the finest pieces of exposition that have been written by poets on the subject of their art, and will no doubt take rank as a classic in its field. We quote the following passage on "inspiration":

"Some think that a kind of heaven opens at this instant, and that therefrom an extraordinary ray falls, by which are illuminated at the same time certain ideas until then free, and as it were, ignorant of each other. And now here they are perfectly united, all at once, and seemingly made for each other from the beginning of time: and this without direct preparation, without labor — by that happy effect of light and certitude.

"But ill luck will have it that it is quite often a naïveté, an error, an absurdity, which is thus revealed to us. We must not count merely the favorable instances; this miraculous manner of production by no means assures us of the value of what is produced. The spirit breathes where it will; one may see it breathe upon fools, and it breathes them what they are capable of."

### NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

RUTH LECHLITNER was born in Indiana, educated at the University of Michigan, and now lives in Cold Spring, N. Y. She has contributed frequently to POETRY and other periodicals, and is the author of a recent book, *Tomorrow's Phoenix*, which was characterized by Samuel French Morse in our December issue as "the most distinguished contribution to American revolutionary poetry to date."

YVOR WINTERS, of Los Altos, California, has earned a high reputation as poet and critic since his first appearance here twenty years ago at the age of eighteen. He is the author of several books of poems and essays, including *The Bare Hills*, *The Proof*, *Primitivism and Decadence*, etc., and was editor of the recent anthology, *Twelve Poets of the Pacific*. A new book, *The Moralists: Poems 1928-1938*, will be published this year by New Directions.

EUNICE TIETJENS, now resident in Florida, has been on the staff of POETRY since 1916, serving as associate editor, acting editor, and in recent years as a member of the advisory committee. A book of her reminiscences, *The World at My Shoulder*, has been announced for publication on March 1st by Macmillan.

## Notes on Contributors

WITTER BYNNER, still faithful to his adopted city of Santa Fe, is also well known to our readers. The latest of his long list of books is the *Selected Poems*, with a critical preface by Paul Horgan, published by Knopf.

JAMES DALY, now resident in Sausalito, California, is the author of two books of poems, *The Guilty Sun*, and *One Season Shattered*. Kenneth Burke, reviewing the latter in *POETRY* for August 1936, said of Daly's work that "the subtlety in his rightness is like the subtlety in a right tone of voice: the critical, quantitative, conceptual words for defining it are not yet at hand."

C. A. MILLSPAUGH, formerly of Muncie, Indiana, is now doing research work on a fellowship at the University of Chicago. He is the author of a book of poems, *In Sight of Mountains* (1936), and of a novel, *Men Are Not Stars*, just published by Doubleday, Doran.

ROLFE HUMPHRIES, of New York, is a well-known contributor of verse and criticism to periodicals, and was co-editor of the recent anthology of Spanish war ballads, *And Spain Sings*. His single book, which has lost none of its vitality after ten years, is *Europa*, published in 1928 by Random House.

OSCAR WILLIAMS, also of New York, formerly edited *Rhythmus*, and is the author of a book of poems, *The Golden Darkness*. He reminds us that he first appeared in *POETRY* in 1921, when he was twenty years old. "Early in that year I stopped writing poetry and didn't write another line until March of 1937."

S. FUNAROFF, though still in his twenties, has had a varied career as journalist, advertising writer, and social worker. He was editor of the *Dynamo Poets' Series* and has also edited symposiums of young radical poets for *The New Republic* and *The New Masses*. A book of his verse, *The Spider and the Clock*, will soon be issued by International Publishers.

MARGAN DUTTON, a native of Denver, now lives in La Grange, Illinois. She has appeared once before in *POETRY*, and in other magazines.

MARY CHARLES is the pseudonym of an English poet.

The following make their first appearance:

GARRETT OPPENHEIM was born in Manhattan in 1911. He has contributed many poems to newspapers and magazines.

TRISTRAM LIVINGSTONE is the pseudonym of a Pittsburgh poet who has been for ten years a member of the Boston Symphony and is

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now pursuing an academic career at Harvard under the distinguished guidance of Robert Hillyer. His work has appeared in *Harper's*, *Scribner's*, *The Virginia Quarterly*, *The New Yorker*, etc.

NORMAN NICHOLSON, whose biographical data we have not yet received, sends us his poem from Millum, Cumberland, England.

This month's prose contributors are all familiar. DELMORE SCHWARTZ, whose poems, stories, and criticism in recent magazines and anthologies have attracted much interest, now lives in New York City. A book of his poems will be published in September by New Directions. T. C. WILSON, well known as a reviewer, is American correspondent for the English quarterly, *Life and Letters Today*. EDA LOU WALTON, of New York, has had an eventful career as poet and critic since leaving her native New Mexico in 1918. SHERMAN CONRAD was born in Buffalo in 1911, educated at Harvard, and is now working in the Theatre Studio at Bennington, Vermont.

### BOOKS RECEIVED

#### ORIGINAL VERSE:

- U. S. 1*, by Muriel Rukeyser. Covici-Friede.  
*The Crystal World*, by Richard Aldington. Doubleday, Doran & Co.  
*Natural History*, by Raymond Holden. Henry Holt & Co.  
*The Day's Work*, by Oscar Brynes. Harcourt, Brace & Co.  
*The House of Dreams*, by Patience Strong. E. P. Dutton & Co.  
*Spider Architect*, by Mary Sinton Leitch. Putnam.  
*Roses With the Throng*, by Marie Austin Major. Priv. ptd., Manchester, N. H.

#### PROSE:

- Poetry and Contemplation, A New Preface to Poetics*, by G. Rostrevor Hamilton. Macmillan.  
*From These Roots*, by Mary M. Colum. Chas. Scribner's Sons.  
*Sketch for a Portrait of Rimbaud*, by Humphrey Hare. Brendin Pub. Co., London, England.

#### TRANSLATIONS:

- Sophocles Electra, A Version for the Modern Stage*, by Francis Fergusson. William R. Scott, N. Y. C.  
*One Hundred Poems from the Palatine Anthology, in English Paraphrase*, by Dudley Fitts. New Directions, Norfolk, Conn.

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# Can Poetry Save the Nation?

## \$1,000 PRIZE CONTEST

THE FORUM magazine has organized a prize competition for the most compelling poems *challenging the American people to be alert to their liberties.*

A total of \$1,000 will be awarded in prizes.

This nation won an independent existence not by some process of abstract thought but because her men and women *burned* for liberty. And now the terrifying complications of a machine civilization have bred new forces which threaten the kind of government we call democracy and, with it, our hard-won and long-cherished freedom. Where are the poets who can compel us to maintain our liberty?

In relating this poetry competition to the major world issue of the day, the Editors are not seeking to offer a theme but merely to strike a keynote. It is hoped to secure clear, uncomplicated texts which may be set to music.

The Editors hope that many leading American poets will be moved to enter the competition which has been divided into groups, with prizes for each, as follows:

### A — GENERAL PUBLIC

1st Prize \$300      2nd Prize \$150      3rd Prize \$50

### B — COLLEGE UNDERGRADUATES

1st Prize \$150      2nd Prize \$100      3rd Prize \$50

### C — SECONDARY-SCHOOL STUDENTS

1st Prize \$100      2nd Prize \$60      3rd Prize \$40

### WRITERS' CONFERENCE FELLOWSHIP

The Olivet Writers' Conference, of Olivet College, Michigan, offers a fellowship for 1939, covering all costs of the Conference, to the prize-winning contestant who, in the opinion of the Conference admissions committee, seems most likely to benefit by attendance at the Conference.

### CONSOLATION PRIZES

A copy of "The Complete Rhyming Dictionary," edited by Clement Wood, will be awarded to each of the 50 contestants who seem most likely to profit by it.

**JUDGES** — Padraic Colum, William Allan Neilson, Carl Van Doren

**INSTRUCTIONS:** — No poem is to exceed 40 lines in length. Manuscripts must be addressed to the Poetry Contest Editor, THE FORUM, 570 Lexington Avenue, New York City; and must be mailed before midnight of June 30, 1938. Under no circumstances will any manuscript be returned or its receipt acknowledged. Manuscripts must be clearly marked with the name and address of the contestant and with the group letter (A, B, or C) of the class in which the poem is being entered. Contestants in class B or C must state name of college or school attended. In order to qualify for a prize, the contestant must accompany his submission with a remittance of 25 cents in stamps.

To have great poets  
there must be great audiences too.  
— Whitman

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